

Michael Pope

Life and Death
the Important
Concern

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Pope - Life + Death

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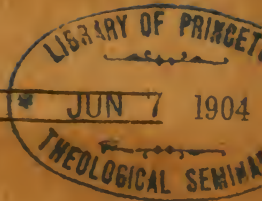
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1455



THE

Epistle Dedicatory.

*To that Church of Christ, to
which I minister in Holy
things.*

Beloved in the Lord

THE Substance of this Discourse, which is now enlarged, by the Occasional Leisure of a few Weeks, was delivered to you in Four Sermons, and is now Inscribed to you, that by a leisurely reading the Eye as well as the Ear, may impress your Minds with a due Sense of the Important Concern of the Word of God, which to every Soul is of the last Moment ; as it will finally issue in Eternal Life or Death.

A Pastoral Care, by which I am both peculiarly endeared and engaged, directs me to the greatest Endeavour to promote your Salvation, which is as much the Design of this Discourse, as 'tis the Desire of the Author, who is abundantly pleased with

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the *Liberty* and *Opportunity* of doing you any Service. My Relation to you is very *near*. and my Obligations are very *great*, by the *Generosity* of Some, and *Civility* of others. which I *freely* own, and *openly* acknowledge, not only as my *Comfort*, but for your *Credit*.

Whatever Degree of *your* Knowledge, Holiness, Peace and Usefulness have been Matter of the *long* Observation of some, or *just* Commendation of others; it may become me according to my *Character*, rather to endeavour to *add* what you *have not*, than *praise* what you *have*. You may as much deserve the *Applause* of some, as you little need the *Flattery* of others; but I had much rather *do good* to you *all*, than only *speak well* of *any*: and therefore in the *View* of the World, I exhort you *all* with the *utmost* Solemnity to consider that the *Word* which is to every Soul the *Savour of life unto life*, or *of death unto death*, is the *sure word of prophecy*, whereunto ye *do well that ye take heed*.

2 Pet. 19.

The Words of the *Incarnate Son of God* must at once *deserve and demand* your most *solemn regard*: For he is the *wonderful Counsellor* who *spake as never Man spake*. In him was united all that was *remarkable* in the People of God in all Generations, to represent to an observing World his *deserving Character*, and *high Commission*. The

Births

Births of some holy Men, were very wonderful, as that of *Isaac* and *John the Baptist*. Some excellent Persons wrought many Miracles, as *Moses* and *Elisha*. Some eminent Saints, were endowed with the Gift of Prophecy, as *Isaiah*, and many others. Some were raised from the Dead, as *Lazarus*: And some did not see Death, but ascended up to Heaven; as *Enoch* and *Elijah*: But the Character and Circumstance of the glorious Saviour of the World, was abundantly more wonderful than all this; for he was born of a Virgin; he had the Spirit of Prophecy without Measure, he wrought greater Miracles than any, and enabled many to do the like; he rose from the Dead himself and raised others too; he conversed with many after his Resurrection, and in the View of others, in a most glorious manner ascended up into Heaven, and is now seated at the Right-hand of the Father. In him were centred all the Excellencies of both Worlds, and in him does the fulness of the Godhead now dwell.

The Voice of so wonderful a Person, must command the Ear of all who have any Concern for Life, when the great things that were done by him, and for him, were never performed, and greater are never to be expected. How contemptible so ever Jesus of Nazareth may be in the Eye of a scoffing Deist and daring Atheist, he must be wonderful

in your Eyes, if you seriously consider that the Blessed God never publish'd the Birth of *any Person* but *his* by *Miracles* ; and never was *any Person* attended on, and served by the *glorious Angels*, as *Jesus your Saviour*; for they carried the *Message* of his Miraculous Conception to the Blessed Virgin, they directed *Joseph* when in *great perplexity*, they publish'd his *Nativity* with a Celestial Hymn, they advised his *Conveyance* to *Egypt*, they order'd his *Removal* to *Judæa*, they ministred to him in the *Wilderness*, they assisted him in his *Agony*, they *roll'd back* the Stone from the Door of the Sepulchre, and, no doubt, with their *glorious Retinue* attended his Ascent up unto the *Excellent Glory*.

John the Baptist, the forerunner of Christ, wrought no *Miracles*, as none had for many *Hundred Years* before the coming of the Saviour, that his *Appearance* might be the more *glorious*. *Moses* indeed God's *high Commissioner*, did many wonderful things ; but neither *he*, nor *any*, ever *em-power'd others* to work *Miracles* in their *own Name* : This is one of the *Peculiar glories* of the Messiah *. None ever wrought a Miracle at *his Death* but Christ, who did darken the Sun, rend the Vail of the Temple, and open the Sepulchres, that the very Dead might witness to him. The memo-

* Monsr. Despaigne's Observat.

able *Exploit* of *Sampson*, is not to be compared with the *glorious Achievements* of the Son of God, who not only wrought Miracles when *dying* but *rose again* and *conversed* with Men, and *raised others*, which is *peculiar* also to the *Saviour* of the *World*. We read of * Three Resurrections *before* the coming of Christ, Three *before* his Death and Three *after* his Resurrection; but none ever appeared after their Death and Revival, and *openly* discoursed with others, and then *ascended up* into Glory, but only the *Son of God* himself —.

He gave *abundant proof* of his *Divine Commission*, which was witness to by *Heaven, Earth, and Hell*. He therefore must be the *Peculiar Object* of your Faith and Love, Hope and Joy; *For God who at sundry Times, Heb. i, and in diverse Manners, spake in Times past unto the Fathers by the Prophets, hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son.* He employ'd Persons at *sundry Times* in *Sacred Messages*, even from *Enoch* to *Malachi*, after whom appeared no *Inspired Person* as commissioned by the Blessed God, until the *Nativity* of the *Baptist*, who, in an exalted Sense, was called the *Prophet of the highest.* Luk. i. Before his Day, God spoke by the Pro-^{19.}

* 1 King. 17. 2 King. 4. 13. Luke 7. 15. Math. 9. John 11. Math. 27. 52. Acts 9. 40. Acts 20, 9. The first raised in the old Testament, and the first in the new, the only Son of a Widow; let the Widow trust in him.

phets in *divers manners*. The *Inspired Messengers* were instructed by *Urim and Thummim*, by *Dreams and Visions*, by *audible Voices* and *immediate Revelations*.

They gave *full Proof* of their *Commission*, by the *transcendent Excellency* and *admirable Propriety* of their *Doctrines*, by which the *Glory of God* and the *Good of Mankind* were *duly promoted*.

What they deliver'd was *according to Truth*; if their *Declarations* did not agree with the *Sacred Standard*, the *Prophets* were, by the *Order of Heaven*, not only to be *rejected*, but *put to Death*. How *wonderful* so ever their *Works* might appear to be, if their *Words* were not according to the *Divine Command*, their *Lives* were *forfeited*.

Lev. 18. For so we read : *The Prophet which shall*
 26. *presume to speak a Word in my Name, which I*
 Lev. 13. *have not commanded him to speak, or that*
 1, 2, 4, 5. *shall speak in the Name of other gods, even*
that Prophet shall die. And if there arise
among you a Prophet, and giveth thee a Sign
or Wonder, and the Sign or the Wonder come
to pass whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let
us go after other gods, and let us serve them,
thou shalt not hearken to the Words of that Pro-
phet, and that Prophet shall be put to Death.

As the *Sacred Messengers* manifested their *Commission* by *Truth*, so they did also re-commend themselves by *Purity*; a *Holy Life* gave testimony to a *Holy Doctrine*;
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for we read that *Holy Men of old, spake as they were moved by the holy Ghost.*

And as their *Lives* were *Pure*, so their ^{2 Pet. 21.} *Works* were very wonderful. They wrought *Miracles* as undeniable *Proofs* of their *High Commission*; but yet, notwithstanding all possible *Miracles*, they were not to be received, if their *Prophecies* were not fulfilled; if what they declared did not come to pass, they were mark'd by the very *Finger of God*, as *false Prophets*. When a *Prophet* speaketh in ^{Lev. 18.} the *Name of the Lord*, if the thing follow not, ^{22.} nor come to pass, that is the thing which the *Lord* hath not spoken; but the *Prophet* hath spoken it presumptuously, thou shalt not be afraid of him. Thus the *Eternal Jehovah* revealed himself from Age to Age; and by these certain *Rules*, it was fully known who were sent by him.

After all such *Sacred Messengers*, the *Son of God* himself, appears in the fulness of *Time*, to Preach to a Perishing World; O Adorable *Condescension*! O Matchless *Grace*! The only *Begotten* of the *Father* assumes the *Likeness* of *sinful Flesh*, that in our *Body* he might instruct and save our *Souls*; Surely you will *Reverence* him: You will ^{Math. 21,} *hear* him; for it must be a Matter of ^{37.} *infinite Importance*, that the *Brightness of the Father's Glory*, and express *Image of his Person* does engage in; what he says and does, must deserve the most *observing-Eye* and
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attentive Ear, the full Credit, high Admiration, and most perfect Imitation of the whole World ; You in particular, will see abundant Reason to receive him, Commission'd by God, as the Saviour of Mankind, if you consider a few things.

Wise and Holy Persons saw him in the Promise ; they by an Eye of Faith beheld him in the Types and Figures, the Shadows and Prophecies of the legal Dispensation :

Joh. 8.56. they saw his Day afar off, and were glad.

They who lived in the Days of his open appearance, who saw him Incarnate, had all imaginable Reason to Credit and receive him, because of the Testimony he gave.

For many Prophecies were exactly fulfilled in and by him, that did expressly refer to his Birth, Life and Passion, according to the clear Sense of the Words, and received Interpretation of the Jewish Doctors.

Many Miracles he wrought, that were the Objects of sense, and of all the Senses, and of all the Senses of many Persons, that were incontestable proofs of his high Commission ; such as his Healing many Distempers by a Word, his feeding Five Thousand Persons with Five Loaves and Two Fishes, his casting out evil Spirits, his stilling Winds and Waves, his raising the Dead.

*Luke 4. His Performances were so very peculiar,
36. that his great Enemies were all amazed a-
Mark 2. mong themselves, saying, What a Word is
12. this ;*

this ; the very Scribes were amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it in this Fashion.

The *Doctrines* he taught were most pure and peaceable, most worthy of God and useful to Man ; and these were witness to by Heaven : For at his *Birth* a *Star* appeared and the heavenly Host, (as has been observed,) sung ; God the Father by an *Audible Voice* declared him his *Beloved Son* in whom he was well pleased ; And the *Blessed Spirit* appeared * in the form of a *Dove*, and afterwards gave a most glorious *Testimony* to the Truth of his *Doctrine*, by the *astonishing Gift* of Tongues, than which nothing greater can be expected or desired.

As they who lived in our Saviour's time, had abundant reason to believe in Christ, so they who lived in After-Ages had sufficient reason to Credit, what he had said and done ; for they had a faithful Account of the whole Management as to *Doctrines, Prophecies, Miracles, and Attestations*, by Persons of the greatest Integrity and Ability ; who were Eye and Ear-witnesses and so could not mistake ; and who were ready to Seal the Truth they delivered with their Blood, and could not possibly gain any thing

* Not in the real shape of a Dove for than it should have been *ὡς περισσέως* and not *ὡς περισσέως*, but in the form of a bright light or Fire as on the Apostles, which descended with a hovering motion, as a Dove lights upon a place.

by *deceiving* others, when their very *Lives* were every moment because of your *Testimony* in the greatest danger.

Besides, The *glorious Resurrection* of Christ was a very *powerful Argument* sufficient to convince all Observers, that he was the Son of God; for never was *greater Proof* given of any matter of Fact; so that none could find the *least* reason to doubt the Reality of that which was so *apparent* to the sense of many; in which the Goodness of God was *eminently* concerned, as it is the *peculiar Basis* of our Christian Faith and Hope.

After the *Resurrection* of Christ the Disciples in his *Name*, and by his *Power wrought many Miracles*, so as to dispossess Devils, cure many Distempers in a moment, and raise the dead; which did *abundantly* prove their *Message was Divine*; and * *several Predictions* in a little while were *exactly* fulfilled, particularly those that related to the *Destruction* of the *Jewish Temple*, than which scarce any thing is more remarkable as to *Time* and *Place* in all Story.

You who now *bear and read* the Word of Christ, on whom the *Ends of the World* are come, have not *less reason* to Credit his

* Three with Reference to the Disciples, Math. 3. 13. Luk. 10. 18. Math. 26. 13. Two with reference to the Jewish Nation Math. 21. 43. Rom. 2. 2. besides what did particularly refer to the Temple, which were all fulfilled in Forty Two Years.

Authority than *any others*, if you consider, the *sacred Writings* in which are recorded the *Words and Works* of Christ, are conveyed down to you, with the *greatest fidelity*: so that there can be no more *suspicion* of Forgery and Corruption in their conveyance, nor so much, than there may be in the *common security* of any recorded *Act of Parliament*. You have not indeed the *immediate Evidence* of Sense; but yet you have the *Testimony* of Sense in some *standing Memorials*, whereby you are as *sure* of the *past matters of Fact*; as any can be by the sight of the *Monument*, of the dreadful Fire that consumed the great City of the Nation.

And the *wonderderful spread* of the Gospel from Age to Age, without the *assistance of force or fraud*, notwithstanding the united *Power and Policy* of *Earth and Hell*, deserves your serious regard as 'tis a *considerable Proof* of a Divine Mission: For the *foolishness of Preaching* did bear down the *Learning and Eloquence*, the *Malice and Prejudice* of the greatest Opposers:

Besides, the *Blood of Martyrs* is a *glorious Testimony*, if all Circumstances in that *melancholy Concern* were *duly consider'd*: And the shining *Evidence of divine Providence* in the righteous Execution of *declared Threatnings*, and wonderful accomplishment of *many Promises* as to *Nations or particular Persons*, directs the Eye to the *Word of Christ*

as the *sacred Truth*: And the *Witness* of the *Blessed Spirit* is very *considerable* in the *View* of a *serious Mind*, as the *Hearts* of those that firmly believe the *Gospel*, are changed into the *Image* of *God* by the abiding *Influence* of *Purity* and *Peace*, whereby they are, according to the *Declaration* of the *Gospel*, *supported* and *refreshed* under the greatest *Pressures* and forest *Tryals*. If all these things are *set in View*, you cannot but see abundant reason to believe in *Jesus of Nazareth* as your *Lord and Saviour*.

Luke 16.
19.

And I must *freely* tell you, to awaken the most *awful Thought*. that if any of you are not *perswaded* by *Christ and his Apostles*, 'tis not likely you will ever be convinced, tho' *one should rise from the Dead*; for the *appointed Means* of *Grace* are most *apt* and *sufficient* to answer their *End*. By a due *Consideration* of the *divine Perfections* we may be fully assured the *Blessed God* would not settle any *Constitution* of *Grace* that was not most *apt* to promote the common *Salvation*. He that doth every thing in the *Concerns* of *Nature* in exact *Number*, *Weight*, and *Measure*, will certainly proceed according to *consummate Wisdom*, in the great *Concern* of *Immortal Souls*; the *Goodness* as well as the *Wisdom* of *God*, will direct and incline to what is most *fit and proper* in a matter of *infinite Importance*, in which his *own Glory* and the *everlasting Welfare* of

of some of the *noblest* of his Creatures are *peculiarly* concerned: If neither *Insincerity* nor *Insufficiency* can be ascribed to the Deity, without *Blasphemy*, his proposed *End* must be *great and good*, and his *appointed Means* every way *suitable* to such an *End*. And therefore any *extraordinary Means* are not *necessary*, nor are they more *likely* to convince any than what has been already used.

For if a *Messenger* should come from the Dead, he could not tell you any *greater* thing or any thing in which you was *more concerned*, than what you *do* or *may* know by the *Word of God*. He might represent to you the *Glory* of Heaven, and *Torments* of Hell, and tell you who shall be advanced to the one, and condemned to the other, and for what *Reasons*; and is not that plainly and fully declared in the *sacred Book*.

Besides he could not give a *greater Proof* of the *Truth* of any thing he might deliver, than what is *given* to the *Revelation* of the *Son of God*; he cannot by *Words*; for can he say any thing more *lofty and sublime*? More *awful and majestick*? More *holy and pure*? More *useful and beneficial*? More *alluring or enforcing*, than what the *Son of God* has already said: And he cannot by *Works*, for if he should discover the *Secrets* of the Heart, tell things to come, still Winds and Waves, cure all manner of *Distempers*, and raise the
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the Dead, that has been *already* done as a *glorious Testimony* to Gospel Truth:

And might not the *Judgment* of some, and the *Fancy* of others raise *many Objections* against such a Messenger. Many might easily question the *Reality* of such an *Appearance*, and apprehend it to be only an *Image of Air*; a *waking Dream*, the Off-spring of a *distempered Body* and *deluded Mind*; and if not, how will they know that the Messenger came from the *dead*? May they not say we know that God spoke unto Moses, but as for this fellow we know not from whence he is; but if they should be satisfied that he came from the *invisible World*, how will they be sure he is not a *lying Spirit*, and so did not falsify and deceive.

Besides, if a *Message* was brought by one that rose from the Dead, it would be attended with *many Inconveniencies* that would render it *less apt* to convince and persuade; for it might make an *Impression* too strong, and yet too *Transient*, that might rather hinder Thought, then promote it: It might be an *awakening Lecture* indeed, that would alarm all the Powers of Nature, and yet the Soul be only *amazed*, and not persuaded: For we find when *The Angel* from Heaven sat on the Stone, at the door of the Sepulchre, the Keepers shook and became as dead Men; but they were not made thereby *spiritually alive*. *Violent Impressions* are generally

nerally very *Transient*; a *Storm* at Sea is soon forgot; the Convictions of Persons restored to Health after long and threatening Sickness, notwithstanding solemn Vows, raised on a *supposed Death-Bed*, are soon stifled; and the Terrors of the most *awakening Providences* like a Clap of Thunder, in a little while soon lose all their Force.

Besides, the most *extraordinary Methods* that can be desired have *been used*, and yet proved *unsuccessful*; for the Law was delivered with *Thunder* and *Lightning*, and yet the Spectators soon bowed down afterwards to the *golden Calf*; many *Wonders* were wrought in the sight of *Pharoah*, and yet after all he *hardned* his Heart: *Balaam* was *stopt* by an Angel, and yet *went on* in the *ways of Unrighteousness*. The King of Israel enquired of *Gebazi*, concerning the *great things* his Master *Elisha* had done; and both the *Shunamite* and her Son, whom the Prophet had restored to Life, *shewed themselves* to the King, than which nothing can be supposed more *Remarkable*; and yet he was not changed, tho' *Gebazi* said, *my Lord, O King, This is the Woman and her Son whom Elisha restored to Life*. *Lazarus* was raised from the Dead, and our *Blessed Lord* rose himself, and conversed with Men; and yet many did not *believe*. In short the *Temper* of those that *believe not* the Gospel is so very *perverse* and *obstinate*, that

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the most wonderful Works are not likely ever to convince them : What ever aptitude might be supposed in them, they cannot be effectual without the influence of the *Blessed Spirit*, who only convinceth the *World of Sin*. And if the Word of God is not credited, that convincing Influence is not to be expected, for there is no reason for it when such have already grieved and quencht the Spirit ; and there is great reason against it, for God will maintain the Honour of his own Institution, and not encourage the hope of daring Criminals, who have vilified his sacred Ordinance, despised his high Authority and poured contempt on the whole Constitution of Grace. What he has said and done, was sufficient to answer the great End ; and if that is slighted, the Blessing is forfeited, and such may as well expect to be translated as Enoch, or raised from the Dead as Lazarus, as to be sanctify'd by extraordinary means, when the Gospel, that is the Ministration of the Spirit, does not convince and perswade them. It becomes you therefore to magnify the Word of God as the sacred Rule of Life and Hope ; study its mysterious Doctrines, observe its excellent Examples, obey its righteous Commands, awe your Spirits with its dreadful Threatnings, encourage your selves by its rich and precious Promises, glory in its high and gracious Priviledges, and, in
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the way of *constant obedience*, rejoice in the *sure Hope* of its glorious Rewards, and then will the Word be to you the *Savour of Life unto Life*. Upon this *Basis* you stand for *Eternity*.

If you therefore carefully read, and attentively hear the great *Gospel Doctrines*, you will not be fond of *New Dispensations*, in which *Artful Representations*, *Physical Prescriptions*, and *Chymical Operations*, may have no *small Concern* : 'Tis matter of great Lamentation that any, by *Mechanical Agitations*, *Melancholy Suggestions*, or *Diabolical Delusions*, should under the *Blasphemous Pretence* of the *Dictate* of the *Holy and Eternal Spirit*, defecrate the *Altars* of God, divest the *Ministry* of its high Authority, and *profanely* trample on all *Holy Ordinances* and *Sacred Ministrations*. Such *New Lights* do manifest the *Power of the Flesh*, but not the *Purity of the Spirit*. They are surely to be rejected with the greatest *Abhorrence*, whose *Prophecy* is but a *Pretence*, whose *Divinity* tends to *Deism*, whose *Devotion* is a *Design*, and whose *Godliness* is *Gain* ; or at least, whose *whole Management* is *meer Delusion*. The *Rights* of the *Christian Church*, and the *Reasons* of your *Faith* and *Hope*, are to be strictly guarded against the *Impious Invasion* of *Prophetical Pretenders*, who, tho' they may speak according to *Scripture*, with *Peculiar Postures*

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of

Galat. 1.
8.

of Body, and Passions of Mind, are to be dispised and opposed, while they pretend to *Immediate Inspiration*, and an *Extraordinary Mission*; but do not produce their *Credentials*. If an *Angel* came from *Heaven*, and *preach'd* any thing *contrary* to *Scripture*, he is *declared accursed*; 'tis therefore requisite for such, to utter *Words agreeable* to *sacred Truth*, that they may incline any to think they speak as *sent* by God. But if their Message has no *New* or *False Doctrine* to *please* or *deceive*; they are still obliged to give *full proof* of their *Mission*, before they can lay *claim* to the Faith of any; for their supposed *Message* may be true as to *Doctrine*, and yet they not be commissioned *Messengers* from God; what they say, may be *good*, and yet what they *design* very *bad*: There is a *vast difference* between the *Proof* of a *Message*, and the *Proof* of an *extraordinary Mission*: A *Message* must be proved by its *Conformity* to the *sacred Standard*; but the *Mission*, by *Miracles*, *Purity*, and *Truth* as to all *Predictions*. If any shall *teach* according to *Scripture*, and yet at the same time shall *prophecy* as to a *particular Event*, if what they *declare*, as from God, does not *come to pass*, they are condemned as *false Prophets*, by the *infallible Word* of the *Eternal God*. They may at their *Peril* set up for God's *High Commissioners*, and *boldly use* his *Name*; but their *prophetical Warrant* is not *signed* by him.

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Deut. 18.
28.

The Execution of a *divine Threatning*, may for wise and merciful Reasons be *suspended*; but the Accomplishment of a *sacred Prophecy* specifying *Time* and *Place*, when no *Condition* does make an *Exception*, never was. Ignorant Pretenders may say, the Prophet *Jonah* was *disappointed*, and *Jeremiah* *deceived*; but meer Assertion is no proof. They may say, such a *Person* shall *dye*, and on a *certain day* shall rise again, and yet still declare they are true Prophets, tho' the *thing does not come to pass*; but their *Impious Presumption* does *expose* them the more to all that have a *Value* for *sense* and *seriousness*; for if the *Redeemer* of the World had not *rose* again, according to his own *Declaration*, our *Faith* this day had been *vain*; and shall any then give *Credit* to those *Deceivers*, who while they pretend to an *Extraordinary Call*, neither *say* nor *do* more than others.

Four Rules have been already laid down, by which you may judge of *True* and *False Prophets*; and by all of them this *New Dispensation* may be condemned, as their *Prophecies* are false, and no *Miracles* are performed; as *Divine Ordinances* are neglected, and as the *Lives* of some are very different from a *Gospel-Rule*; and yet has it been said by one * of no *small Character* amongst them,

* In a Letter from one of the Prophets to a Friend at Bristol, in which are many things both false and foolish, weak and wicked.

that if they have not given *proof* of their *prophetical Mission*, it may be suspected that what the *Apostles* did, was done by the *power* of *Satan* transforming himself into an *Angel of Light*. So *Blasphemous* are the *Suggestions* of some, after all their *shameful Disappointments*. If these Persons had the *Gift of Tongues*, the *Learned* might *Discourse* with them, and the *Ignorant* not be deceived by them; which might be reasonably expected with a *Spirit of Prophecy*, that thereby the *Conversion* of the *Heathens* might be the better promoted; but *one Tongue* is too much for *Falshood* and *Blasphemy*.

They say, they expect the *Gift of Healing*; but if they don't do *more good* to the *Bodies* than they have done to the *Souls* of *Men*, all will *dye* under their *Hands*, and *rise again* in a *Day* when all *their Prophecies* will cease for ever. The Words spoken to the Prophet

Ezek. 83. *Ezekiel*. have an awful Sound: *Son of Man* prophecy against the *Prophets* of *Israel* that *Prophecy*, and say thou unto them that *Pophecy* out of their own *Hearts*, hear the *Word* of the *Lord*. Thus saith the *Lord God*, wo unto the *foolish Prophets* that follow their own *Spirit* and have seen nothing. And thus without any *Pretence to Immediate Inspiration*, I give them warning from the *word* of *God*, wishing them *Piety* and *Prudence*, *Peace* and *Loyalty*, that they may declare against the *Folly* of

Enthusiasm, the Growth of Deism, the Sin of Uncleanness, the Policy of Rome, and the Power of France.

And I also warn you my Brethren, beware of False Prophets; for many false Prophets ^{Math. 1. 14.} are gone out into the World. Believe not ^{1 John 4. 1.} every Spirit, but seriously consider that the Gospel does not direct and encourage any to expect a new Dispensation, it does not give us any hope that even true Prophets will appear at any time, to give a clearer Revelation of the divine Will, and settle a New Dispensation; but it doth declare that there will be false Prophets, Pretenders to Inspiration, who will, if possible, deceive the very Elect. Watch therefore and Pray that you may not be led into Temptation, but be delivered from evil.

You may be sure a Spirit of Purity is more excellent than a Spirit of Prophecy; real Sanctification more desirable than prophetic Revelation, for the one is only the Privilege of good Men, the other may for a time and for a particular End be vouchsafed to bad Men, as Balaam. The one is for your own Advantage, the other for the benefit of others; the one is always serviceable, the other may sometimes be injurious; for it ^{1 Cor. 13. 1.} may puff up: The one affects the Head, the other purifies the Heart; the one fits for Heaven, but the other of its self, can't prevent our falling into Hell: for speaking with the Tongues of Men and Angels without Gospel- ^{1 Cor. 8.}

Charity, love to God and Man, *availeth nothing*; Look therefore to *practical Godliness*, which consists in inward Purity and outward Usefulness, that will promote your *Credit* and *Comfort* on Earth, and your *Felicity* in Heaven.

This is the Design of the following *Discourse*, wherein I have given *my Testimony*, in a *secure degenerate Age*, against *secret Hypocrisy* and daring *Prophaness*. The Word and Ways of God are despised and disgraced, by *corrupt Principles* and *licentious Practices*; which if not reprov'd and restrained, will add to the *guilt* of those whose *duty* it is to promote the greatest *Reformation*. I have endeavour'd according to my *little Leisure* and *Ability* to represent, in *open View*, the *important Concern* of the Gospel; with a desire rather to *Profit* all than *Please* any; As I had rather *do good* to *one Soul*, than by *flattery* gain the admiration of the *World*. I have aimed at such a *Variety* suitable to the *Subject* as may best serve both *Speculation* and *Devotion*, as I am *Debtor* both to the *Wise* and *Unwise*. If it ministers any *Light* to the *Head*, or *Warmth* to the *Heart*, so as to prevent both *Enthusiasm* and *Superstition*, and promote the *Power* of *true Piety*, which cannot consist either in *blind Devotion*, or a *spiritless Form*; I shall be abundantly *thankful* as any *thereby* are made *wiser* or *better*. If there is any *propriety* in the matter, *proportion* in the *Method*, or *perspicui-*

ty in the *Stile* of this Discourse to promote *common Edification*, it may answer a *greater End* than a *Critical Nicety* that can only please those who had rather *look great*, than *do good*. A *Soul-concern* needs no *Finery*, and *sacred Truth* has a *Native Lustre* that to an *observing Eye* shines brighter than the *glittering Phrase* of Men. There is a *solemn Plainness*, and a *Noble Simplicity* in *Gospel-Truths* that affects *serious Spirits*, more than all the *Art and Airs* of humane Eloquence : *Pure Gold* needs no *Varnish*, a *Sun beam* no *Gilding*, and *Food* no *Paint*, and the *Truth of God* no *artfull Pageantry* to recommend it to any that value the *purity and power* of the Gospel. I have not therefore taken *any pains* to *shape* the Discourse to the *humour* of some, or *dress it* to the *Fancy* of others, who are so fond of what they call *good Language* that rather than not *garnish* a Sermon, will run in *debt* to a Play, or *rob* a Poem. For *my part*, I am fully satisfied of the Truth of what a *Great *Writer* observes, that we cannot speak of the things of God better than in the Words of God; and the Neglect of *Scripture Language* in Sermons, I am perswaded is one Cause of the *Decay of Religion* in this Age, wherein the *Form of Man*, by some is more valued than the *Power of God*.

I have in *some measure* considered both *Precept* and *Privilege*, to awaken Sin-

* Chillingworth, p. 152.

ners, and comfort Saints; *Grace* and *Duty*, to prevent the *Presumption* of some, and the *Despair* of others; and in all *disputable Matters* I have endeavoured to avoid a *Magisterial Decision*: while any plead for *Faith* they must not trespass on *Charity*. I would therefore freely give to every one that *Liberty*, that I would with *becoming Modesty* take my self. I have given a *Portion* to the *eleven Tribes*, and have not forgot the *Tribe of Levi*, who may easily excuse the *Freedom* I have taken when on *their management* in some sense does depend the *important Concern* of *Life* and *Death*. What is due to any, as to *Thought* or *Phrase*, as *Memory* served, I have paid with a *Marginal Note*; so that I hope, I may escape the *Inquisition* of some *Criticks*, who often rise in *sound*, and fall in *sense*, and are often times as *useless* as they are *Uncharitable*. If I had not thought the *Subject* was of the greatest *Importance*, and if I had found by *Eye* or *Ear*, that any had *enlarged on it*, I had wrote *much less*; and if I had had *Leisure* for *another Review*, I might have prevented some *Imperfections* which I see my self, and have reason to think that *others* will see many more.

It is a *Pleasure* to me to think that all *good Men* must agree in *greater things* than 'tis possible for them to *differ* in; so that a *Partiular Aspect* in any *Discourse* on any

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Distinction of Christians, can answer no great End. The *Impression* of the Spirit of God on all the godly, is infinitely more valuable than the *Signature* of any Party. What is Particular in any, cannot be so excellent as what is Common to all who worship God in Spirit and in Truth. *Charity* is Divine, but not *Bigotry*; the *Inventions* of Men should not fill the House of God; and I am sure *Seriousness* is much better than *Superstition*; but yet what is excellent in all, is to be valued by all, and no inclosure must shut out *Charity*. You worship God according to *Scripture Rule*, and in your *Constitution*, there is nothing Remarkably defective, as to *Doctrine, Worship* or *Discipline*. You have as little Reason to be ashamed, as you have to be afraid, when you have a *Warrant* both from the Law of God and Man; you may therefore safely separate from what is bad in any, if you rightly value what is good in all. You propose by your Profession further Reformation in *Worship* and *Discipline*, which is desired by all the wise and good, who have a tender Regard to the Divine Glory, and the Good of Immortal Souls. May your Souls prosper by the Blessings of the Holy Altar, and you need not then be concern'd about the Pinnacle of any Temple. If you are of the Church of Antioch, where the *AAs* II. Disciples were first called Christians, and of ^{26.} Rom. 8. the Perswasion of the great Apostle, that ^{38.}

nothing shall separate you from the Love of God ; you need not make any Inquiry about any *Forms* and *Fashions*, for such Persons must certainly know the *Mind of Christ*. You may perhaps expect from me some *particular Directions* in this *Dedication* ; but such you will find in the following *Discourse*, which may, by a careful reading, be a frequent *Visitor* and faithful *Monitor*, when I shall be *disabled* by *Sickness*, or *remov'd* by *Death*.

Let growing *Purity* and *Peace* be your *Strength* and *Ornament*, as the Two firm and shining *Pillars* on which the *Glorious Temple* stood. Worship God in your *Families* ; for if God has not an *Altar* there, Satan will soon have a *Seat* ; *Prayer* prevents the *Curse*, and *Purity* only promotes the *Blessing* ; attend with *Reverence* and *Constancy* on the *Publick Ordinances*, considering well that the *Word of God* is to every Soul *Eternal Life* or *Death* ; *Heaven* or *Hell* will empty all *Assemblies* in a little while. Converse therefore with your own *Souls*, as lodg'd in *dying Bodies*, which may drop to the *Ground* in a *Moment*, in the *House of God*, as well as in your own *. Keep a *Tender Conscience* by *doing Justice*, *loving Mercy*, and *walking humbly with your God*. Promote as much as you can the *Holiness* and *Happiness* of the *Places* where you live by *Purity* and *Charity*, that

* As did Mr. Cadwallador, whose *Funeral Sermon* was preach'd before I settled among you, and is now printed.

you may sensibly grow in Grace and in the Knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To this end Remember the Words of a very excellent Person : * *Religion does not lye in barren Speculations, smoaky Controversies, empty Formalities, Superstitious Ceremonies, fanciesd Curiosities, censorious Preciseness, in zealous Words, or demure Looks ; but in the Fruits of the Spirit, Faith, Hope, and Charity.* And thus I commend you to God, who can fill you with Joy and Peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, through the Power of the Holy Ghost. And I earnestly desire, without making any Apology for a long Dedication, because you will allow me not only to speak, but Preach and Pray, that you would put up a daily Request for me and my Brother, in the Labours of the Gospel at the Throne of Grace, that we may have an encrease of Gifts and Graces suitable to our Work, to fill up the Station wherein God hath set us, and make full proof of our Ministry, which is the highest Ambition of his Soul, and the avowed Scope of his Life who would by all means approve himself a faithful Promoter of Truth, Peace, and Holiness, as he is the Servant of Christ, and your Servant in the Work of the Gospel, for Jesus sake,

Bristol, July 9. 1709.

Michael Pope.

* Dr. Barrow.

THE METHOD.

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2. In what sense the Saviour of Death.
3. The Cause of the One.
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7. We should pray with Fervour and Constancy, that it may be a Saviour of Life.

8. We should take heed we don't grieve the Spirit, by whom the Word is Life.

9. It becomes them thankfully and joyfully to adore the Grace of God, to whom 'tis a Saviour of Life.

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LIFE *and* DEATH

THE

Important Concern, &c.

2 C O R. Ch. II. Ver. 16.

To the one we are a Saviour of Death unto Death, and to the other, a Saviour of Life unto Life---

C H A P I.

The Connexion of the Text consider'd, the Words explain'd, in what Sense the Word of God is the Saviour of Life unto Life, in four General Heads.

IT may easily be supposed, that the Great Apostle of the *Gentiles* wrote this Epistle to the *Corinthians*, after his second coming to *Macedonia*, mention'd in the Acts of the Apostles, when at *Philippi*, where he stay'd till Acts 20.3. the days of unleavened Bread, and while *Timothy* was with him; from thence 'twas sent Acts 20. Verf 6.

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per-

perhaps by *Titus* a Year after the first Epistle, and not long before the Apostles coming himself unto them. *Corinth* was a large City, in those days famous for Learning, Trade, and Riches, and infamous for Pride, Strife, and Lewdness, * to a Proverb † : Which Remark gives great light to many passages of the Epistle; in this Chapter we have an account of the Church-censure, with reference to an Incestuous Person: 'tis not necessary to enquire whether the Person guilty was a Philosopher, or a Mechanick, or whether the other Person concern'd in the heinous Sin, was a Mother, or Mother-in-Law; the Crime was very great, the Censure very Just, and the Method prescrib'd very Wise and Merciful to destroy the Flesh, and prevent the Great Enemy of Souls taking any Advantage either by Sin or Sorrow. After the Apostle had desired the Brethren to *Confirm their Love towards the sorrowful Penitent, as a full proof of their Obedience to him, who had forgiven it in the Person of Christ*; he acquaints them with his Success at Troas, as a Door was open'd by the Lord for his preaching the Gospel, a Door of Leave, and Life, as he was allow'd and accepted in the declaring the Mind of Christ, tho' he had no rest in his Spirit, because *Titus was not then with him, yet he did rejoice and triumph in Christ, who made manifest the Savour of his Knowledge by him in every Place*; the Spiritual Presence of Christ was matter of greater Joy, than the

* In it was a Temple dedicated to Venus.

† A Corinthian Woman in the Language of the Ancients was a whorish Woman, Hefych.

Bodily Presence of the most beloved Companion could possibly be. Upon this Occasion the Apostle comforts himself under the very melancholy Consideration, that his Labours had not always desired Success; inasmuch as tho' some did perish, the Apostles as faithful in their Work, were *unto God a sweet Savour of* Verf. 15. *Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish*; the Sacrifice of Christ is said in a peculiar Sense, to be a *sweet-smelling Savour*, * as the Eph. 5.2. great Sin-offering that did effectually take away Sin, for *his Blood cleanseth from all Sin*. Under 1 Joh. 1.7. the Law there was *no Perfume* in the Sin-offerings, they were not perfectly acceptable, as they did not really and fully purge away Sin; so that all the Blood-shed under the Law did not give such a *sweet Savour* as the Meritorious Blood of Christ which fully expiated all Sin; and yet some will perish for want of the due Application of that Blood by faith in Christ: But the Ministers of Christ, are in an eminent Sense the *sweet Savour of Christ* fully acceptable to him, as they faithfully answer their End, though many may die under the Gospel of Life. As the High Priest under the Law was anointed with the *sweet Perfume*, so every Minister of the Gospel is as acceptable to God, as the High Priest was, if he Acts according to his high Commission; tho' with many his Labour may be in vain, he shall be accepted and rewarded according to his own Faithfulness, and not according to the People's Fruitfulness. The success of the Gospel depends on the

* L'observat. De Mons^r Despaigne.

Blessing of God, and not on the *Will* or *Work* of Man, and therefore is not always the same. To some the Ministers of Christ are the *Savour of Death unto Death*, and to others the *Savour of Life unto Life*. The word of God is the sovereign Remedy, most apt to recover diseased Spirits; 'tis not like some common Medicines, which if they do no good, do no hurt; but 'tis either *Life or Death*, it kills or cures, so contrary is its effect on some Persons. To some Christ himself was a *Corner-stone*, on which they built their Faith and Hope, but to others a *Stone of stumbling*, by which they were bruised and broken; the *Sun of Righteousness* did rise on some with healing in his Wings, but on others did set in a dark and dismal Cloud; it's Beams did harden some as the Clay, and soften others as the Wax; on some the Son of God pronounced a *Blessing*, when he had not *seen such faith in Israel*, on others a *Woe* because of their Infidelity: This is represented as matter of *Wonder*; and indeed the only *two Things* at which our Blessed Lord is said to wonder at all his Life; when in his own Country, and among his own Kin, he could do no might Work; 'tis said he *marvell'd*, because of their *Unbelief*: and when the Centurion said to him, *But speak the word only, and my Servant shall be healed*: We read that *When Jesus heard it, he marvelled and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel*, so that Faith and Infidelity may be said to be the two great Gospel Wonders.

It was much the same with the zealous faithful Servants of Christ, as it was with the Great Master of Israel. The Apostle Peter by preach-

preaching Christ crucified, converted 3000 Souls Acts 2.37. at once, and the Discourse of Holy Stephen on the same Subject, had no other effect, than the gnashing of Teeth. To some the Apostles Acts 7.54. were a Rock of Shelter, to others a Rock of Offence; to some Hearers their Preaching was foolishness, and to many others both the Wisdom ^{1 Cor. 1.} and Power of God; it had a very different effect ^{18.} at distant places. The Apostle Paul had a Door open at Corinth, and at Athens his Net was empty. At one Place he was caressed, at Lystra he was threatned: The Galatians were Gal 4 15. ready to pull out their very Eyes for him, and at Jerusalem they were as ready to pull out his. Thus has it been more or less in all successive Generations, and thus it is in our day. As the Cloud was bright to the Israelites, and dark to the Egyptians; so the word of God do's enlighten the Eyes of some, and blind the Eyes of others; awaken some, and stupifie others; convert some, and confirm others by their criminal misimprovement in their indulged Sins, whereby, notwithstanding the bright Light, and warm Love of a Gospel Dispensation, their Eyes are as dark as Night, and their Hearts as cold as Death. This is a most important Concern, which I shall endeavour to consider as the Text will admit, under four General Heads.

1. I shall consider in what Respects the Word of God may be said to be the Saviour of Life unto Life unto some: 2. In what Respects it may be said to be the Saviour of Death unto Death unto others. 3. What is the Reason of its being a Saviour of Death unto any. 4. What is the Cause of its being a Saviour of Life, unto Life to others; and then apply it:

B 3

1. I shall

I. I shall consider in what Sense the Word of God may be said to be the Saviour of Life unto Life. The word Saviour might very properly be render'd Odour^{*}; the Phrase † Odour of Life, refers to the Language of the Jews, who in their Writings make frequent mention of a ‡ Vital Unguent, and Mortal Odour: They did often say that their Law was an Odour of Life to themselves, but of Death to the Heathen Nations. The Apostle seems here to intimate the very Reverse, that the Gospel is an Odour of Death to the Jews, and of Life to the Gentiles. He asserts it to be not only an Odour of Life, but of Life unto Life; which Phrase I would think imports something very *Emphatical*, though I am not willing to put it on the *Wrack*, as some do Metaphors and Malefactors, and make them confess any thing. I would suppose that the *Import* of the Phrase may be considered with reference to *four Things*, tho' its most proper and immediate Sense may be, it is the Odour of Life unto Life, as 'tis the appointed apt Mean or Instrument under the conduct of the Divine Spirit, to sanctify the Soul here, and save it for ever.

1. The Phrase *Life unto Life*, may import a variety or different kinds of Life: 'tis certain that when the Word is improved, and has by the blessing of God a due effect on the Soul, it in some Sense gives Natural, Legal, Spiritual, and Eternal Life—It gives Natural Life not as to its Being, but Well-being; if we hear the Word

* 'Ogum Odor. † The Hebrew often uses a Substantive in the Genitive Case for an Adjective.

‡ Vid. Buxtorf.

of God so as to obey it, it alters both the *Tenure and Tendency* of the Life of Nature; the wicked who are not changed by the Gospel, hold their Lives only by the same *Tenure*, as a Fly or a Brute, or rather by a *more uncertain one*, as they forfeit their Breath every Moment; but the Lives of the godly, who are sanctify'd by the Word, are secure by a Covenant, that *is in all things well order'd and sure*, which has the *Promise of this Life, as well as of that which is to come*: Such are Immortal, while the glory of God and their truest Interest, and the good of others are promoted by 'em; if these noble Ends are answered, God will be *magnified in their Bodies* by Life, and not by Death. The natural Life of the Wicked tends to Death and Misery, as they are *condemned* Joh. 3. 18 *already*; but the Life of the Righteous, tends to eternal Joy and Felicity. The Word when rightly received, may be said to give a *Legal* Gal. 3. 10 *Life*, as a Sinner that is not renew'd by the Word, is under the *Curse of God*, but they Joh. 5. 24 that believe the Word, are said to *pass from Death to Life, from a Death of Condemnation, to a Life of Liberty, Pardon, and Acceptance*; they are justified by the righteousness of Christ, when sanctified by his Word: They are no longer *under the Law, but under Grace*. But that Rom 5. 18 which I think is principally designed by Life unto Life, is a *Life of Grace* in this World, and of *Glory* in the other, which I shall a little consider.

I. The Word to some is the *Great Instrument in producing Spiritual Life, a Life of Grace*: Nothing is more evident according to holy Writ, than that Man as a Sinner, is *dead in* Col. 2. 13

Trespases and Sins, and that the Word and Spirit giveth Life. Both *Jews* and *Gentiles* have represented a Sinner as dead; 'twas a common saying among the *Jews*, * that the *wicked are dead whilst they live*, according to the Observation of the Learned *Philo*——to which perhaps our blessed Lord referr'd when he said,

Mat. 8. 22. *Let the Dead bury the Dead*; the Gospel is said to
 1 Pet. 4. 6. *be preached to them that are dead* †, that is in a
 1 Tim. 5. 6. *Spiritual Sense*, as the *Widow that lives in Pleasure, is dead whilst she liveth*; the *Gentile World* lay more remarkably under the guilt of some Sins, as the Apostle styles them *Sinners of the Gentiles*; and 'twas a Proverb among the *Jewish Doctors*, that the *Heathens do not Live*. The *Heathens* also had some Notion of this *Spiritual Death* * in the School of *Pythagoras*, when a Person was enter'd, and yet did not observe the Rules of Virtue, he was represented as *Dead by a Funeral Solemnity*; and such are represented as *dead* in the Gospel, to whom the Word, as impressed by the Spirit, giveth not Life; that is, the *incorruptible Seed* by which Sinners are *born again*, and are raised to
 Rom. 6. 4. *newness of Life*. Life is hereby made *new* as to its Principle, Object, Rule and End; a Soul spiritualized by the sacred Word, acts from Faith in, and Love to a Redeemer; he is concern'd chiefly about *Spiritual Objects*, he walks according to the Rule of the Gospel, having a due regard to all the Commandments of God, and

* Maimonides is often cited for such Expressions —— *Impii etiam viventes vocantur mortui.*

† *Oi νεκροί.*

* *Vit. Pythag. Iambl.*

he designs mediately or immediately the display'd *glory of God* in all he do's ; hereby the power of Sin is subdu'd, and the Human Nature perfected, as the Divine Image by Knowledge and Holiness is engraven on the Soul. This Spiritual Life consists in *Spiritual Principles and Practices*, holy Powers within, and holy Performances without, whereby the Man is made a *Partaker of the Divine Nature*, and so 2 Pet. 1. 4. lives as much above himself, as above a Plant, a Brute, or an Idiot ; the Life that he lives *in the Flesh, is a Life of Faith in the Son of God ;* Gal. 2. 20. the Change that is made within is *glorious*, as it either bears some *resemblance* of, or *proportion* to the Divine Perfection, and so in every Grace there is more real Glory, than in the shining Lustre of the Sun, Moon, and Stars ; as Morals make us more like God than the Naturals, who must be acknowledged to be the Standard of all Perfection. In this most excellent Life, all old things are *done away*, and all things become new ; the *Vital Power* is Light and Love, the *Sensitive Power* is Spiritual, as it *savours the things of God*, it *sees* the evil of Sin, the beauty of Holiness, the *transcendent excellency of a Redeemer*, it *tastes* that the *Lord is Gracious*, it *feels* the weight of in- 1 Pet. 2. 3. dwelling Sin, and groans with the Apostle who *will deliver me* ; it *bears* the Voice of Christ in his *Word and Works*, and it *smells* the *Odour of his Ointment*, as his Garments are said to *smell of Myrrh* : Thus the Senses are *spiritually exercised*. Can. 1. 3. The *Elective Power* is also Spiritual, as it *chuseth* the things of God, and as the Passions are all influenced by such a *Choice*, in *desiring* the enjoyment of God above all things,

things, more than Corn, Oil, and Wine ; fearing the displeasure of God, more than Poverty, Banishment, and Death ; exercising a lively hope in the Promises, whereby 'tis made to rejoice in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the Flesh, and when it sorrows, 'tis after a godly sort : To say no more in this great Spiritual Change, the active executive Powers are so influenced, as that such a Person do's no longer live to himself, but to him that died for him, and rose again ; he lives not to the Flesh, for he is no debtor to the Flesh, that Debt was long agoe overpaid ; but he walks in the Spirit, as he denies all ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and lives soberly, righteously, and godly in this World.

Phil. 3. 3. *joyce in Christ Jesus, having no confidence in the Flesh, and when it sorrows, 'tis after a godly sort : To say no more in this great Spiritual Change, the active executive Powers are so influenced, as that such a Person do's no longer live to himself, but to him that died for him, and rose again ; he lives not to the Flesh, for he is no debtor to the Flesh, that Debt was long agoe overpaid ; but he walks in the Spirit, as he denies all ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and lives soberly, righteously, and godly in this World.*

2 Cor. 5. 15. *live to himself, but to him that died for him, and rose again ; he lives not to the Flesh, for he is no debtor to the Flesh, that Debt was long agoe overpaid ; but he walks in the Spirit, as he denies all ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and lives soberly, righteously, and godly in this World.*

Titus 2. 12. *denies all ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and lives soberly, righteously, and godly in this World.*

2. A Life of Glory : The word of God discovers glory to the Soul, and disposes the Soul for Glory ; he discovers a state of glorious Recompence, in which they that love God shall be rewarded for ever. We are fully assured by the Gospel, that when any die they don't cease to be, but rise either stated in an eternal Hell or Heaven ; *Life and Immortality is brought to light by the Gospel.* The * *Heathens* knew but little of the Invisible World, the World of Realities, as this is a *World of Shadows* †, Persons of the greatest Knowledge, and highest Improvements, did but guess at the state of separate Souls : *Plato, Socrates and Cato*, were not at any certainty as to the momentous Consequence of a dying Hour : The *Jews* knew more than the *Pagan World*, as to this great

* Dr. Whitby's *Certainty*, p. 313. † Mr. Nat. Taylors *Preservative against Deism*.

Concern; but yet the pretended Knowledge of all of them, was but as Darknefs and Delusion, if compared with the shining discoveries of a Gospel Dispensation: In this Dispensation the *Son of God himself* came from the Throne of Glory, to set the *Invisible World in view*; he assured his Disciples, that in his *Fathers House were many Mansions*; if it was not so, Joh. 14. 2. he would have told them: his Love to them made it requisite for them, to look on that Declaration as a most *glorious Certainty*; for it could never be supposed, that he who was the *brightness of the Fathers Glory, and express Image of his Person*, should appear in their Nature, die in their stead, pass into *Hades*, and ascend up into Heaven, that he might with the *greater Solemnity* deceive, and disappoint them: The Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, whereby we have sufficient evidence *suitable* to a state of Tryal, that a Life of Grace, will issue in a Life of Glory: tho' we have not a perfect *Map* of the eternal World, describing all the *Particularities* of that glorious State, yet we are assured that our Life in this World is scarce *real*, a vain shew, base and mean, unprofitable and useless, troublesom and distressing, yea, mischievous and destructive if compared with the Life of the bright Inhabitants of the other World: The Life of every Man here is a Life of *Sin and Sorrow*, and the Lives of some are but as one *great Debauch and Revel*, and the Lives of others as one *universal Sigh and Groan*; but in that blessed World where the Righteous shall be rewarded, there is nothing but *perfect Purity and Felicity*: all the Evils both of *Sin and Sorrow*, which we either now feel
or

or fear, will be for ever removed, there will not be one *vain Thought*, one *Sigh* or *Groan* throughout an Eternity : All the *suitable good* that we now enjoy or desire, will be possessed and perfected, all our Powers and Faculties will be refined and enlarged, and the most excellent suitable Objects will please and satisfy for ever ; the Soul will be happy beyond all present expression and thought with the *bright Vision*, *perfect Resemblance*, and *full Enjoyment* of God : The most *Sublime Contemplations*, most *Noble Employments*, most *Delightful Converses*, and most *Ravishing Enjoyments*, will make up the *Felicity* of the Eternal World : such a state of Glory is not only *discover'd* by the Word, but made *sure and certain* to every holy Soul ; it is the *Great Gospel Promise*, as the Promise of the *Messiah*, was the *Great Promise* under the Legal Dispensation ; and 'tis not only *assured* by the Word to righteous Persons, but such are *disposed and fitted* by the Gospel for this promised Glory ; the Word as *imprest* by the Spirit, producing and perfecting *Faith and Love*, do's make them meet for the *Inheritance of the Saints in Light* ; without a due meetness there could be no Enjoyment : a Brute or a Devil can't take pleasure in a state of Consummate Purity, no more can a wicked Man be happy in Heaven ; as there is no agreement between the Object and Faculty, there can be no Delight ; eternal *Distance* or *Difference* must be the Consequence of Sin, if a Sinner were admitted into the abodes of Glory. They therefore that are to *live* with God, are prepared for it by the delightful exercises of *Love to him*, and this is constantly promoted by the Word ;

Word; such are not only fitted for Heaven, but *entitled* to it, they have not a Right by *Descent* or *Purchase*, they don't merit Heaven by *Price* or *Performance*, but their Right is *Gratuitous* and *Filial*, as they are *Sons of his own Will*, begotten by the word of Truth; they are *James 1. Heirs*, it is the *Fathers good pleasure to give them* ^{18.} a *Kingdom*; as their Right is *Filial*, so 'tis *Social*, for such are *joint Heirs with Christ*; they hold *Luke 12. their Right in him*, who is the elder Brother, ^{23.} the *first-born of many Brethren*, and will share *Rom. 8. 17.* the Possession with him; such are not only *entitled* by the Word, but are *encouraged* to rejoice in the hope of this glorious *Reversion*, as what is *near and sure*: *Eternal Life* may be anticipated by firm Faith, and lively Hope, the word of God is as the *Writings* of the entailed Inheritance, and having them in their Hands, they may solace and regale themselves with the delightful thought of taking full *Possession*; such are directed and obliged by the Gospel of Christ, to render the *unseen World evident*, and the future promised Glory *present and substantial* by the lively exercise of Faith, so that they may rejoice notwithstanding the *Sin* and the *Thorn* of the *Flesh*, in expectation of a certain removal from a World of *Darkness* and *Distress*, *Sin* and *Sorrow*, *Folly* and *Fear*, *Pain* and *Peril*, *Distemper* and *Death*, into a State of perfect *Light*, *Love* and *Joy*. Then will the *Soul live indeed*, it will feel *Life unto Life* in eternal Raptures, and everlasting Triumphs, the *Life* of the best here is but a *dying Life*. We are methinks in this World, as the *Child on whom the Prophet stretched forth him-* ^{2 Kings 4. self,} there is a little Warmth, and a little Mo- ^{34, 35.} tion,

tion, but yet we don't stand on our Feet, the dead Bones make a little noise by moving together, but we are not perfectly Organized, and raised up to the Stature of Men; we scarce Live, we Breath, but 'tis in a valley of Tears, and in the shadow of Death with dying Bodies, and languishing Souls; but in the other State our Souls and Bodies will be perfectly healthy, and perfectly happy; the frame of Nature now cracks, and must dissolve, and is every Moment exposed to a thousand Inconveniencies; but in the blessed World no Fire will consume it, no Disease waſt it, no Fall bruise it, no Air corrupt it, no Labour tire it, no Pain wrack it; but it will be a proper Mansion for a glorified Soul, that shall enjoy its God and its self without the least Sin or Sorrow, and that for *ever*: the Soul was the *worse* for the Body in this World, but the Body will be the *better* for the Soul in another, as the Soul by the Word is sanctified, and so conformed to the *Spirit* of Christ, so the *Body* will be also transformed into the likeness of the *Glorious Body of Christ*, and Soul and Body being changed after the shining Image of their Saviour, shall be received into his blisful Presence, and live for ever with him.

2. The Phrase *Life unto Life*, may import *different degrees of Life*; a degree of holy Activity, Usefulness, and Comfort, must be consider'd as the happy Fruit and Consequence of that Spiritual Life which the Word doth produce, as 'tis the *Ministration of the Spirit*. John 3. 5. The blessed Spirit in holy Writ, as he sanctifies the Soul, is represented by *Water, Fire, Oil and Blood*: The Scripture speaketh of *Water*.

ter and the Spirit, by which we are born again; of Math. 3.
the Holy Ghost, and of Fire, by which we are ^{11.}
baptized; of the Unction which we have from the ¹ John 2.
Holy One; and of the sprinkling of the Blood of ^{20.}
Jesus, which is also wrought by the Holy Ghost: ¹ Pet. 1.2.
The great Reason of this particular Representati-
on of the sanctifying Spirit is this; all things
that were cleansed under the Law, were pu-
rified by one of these four means; some things
were purified by Water, as legal Polutions were Numb. 31.
removed by appointed Washings; some by Fire, ^{20.}
as Gold, Silver, and Brass; some by Oil, as the Levit. 14.
Priests and Lepers; and many things by Blood, as ^{16.}
^{Heb. 9. 22.}
is obvious to every Reader, so that by the pow-
er of the Spirit there, is a compleat Sanctificati-
on, as was typified by the legal Purifications.
This Representation may further denote the
Activity, Usefulness and Comfort that do's result
from that Life that is produced by the Spirit,
for these things are very active, useful and
comfortable in their Nature, Design, and Ap-
plication. Certain it is, that in the holy Life
of a sanctified Soul, there is a great degree of
Activity: The word of God when imprest by
the Spirit, is a vital Spring of holy Action,
it puts the Soul on present enquiries, and con-
stant endeavours for God and Eternity; it
causes the Man to cry out, Lord, what wilt ^{Acts 9. 6.}
thou have me to do? and often asking the Que-
stion; what do I more than others for the honour ^{Mat. 5. 47.}
of my Redeemer, the good of my Soul, and
the welfare of others; the Word awakens the
drouzy Faculties, quickens the stupid Spirit,
raises the dead Affections, moves all the Springs
of the Rational Nature, and sets the whole
Man at work for his own Salvation. It makes
him

him *busie* for Heaven, by avoiding what will hinder, and embracing what will promote his spiritual Improvement, so that he will give himself no rest, but will *strive to enter in at the* Luke 13. *streight Gate*, being fully perswaded that many shall seek to enter, but shall not be able. As the 24. Life produced is *very active*, so that *Activity is* Rom. 14. 7. *very useful*, such an one do's not live to him- Prov. 9. 12. *self*, tho' he is *wise for himself*; but he proposes the *noblest Ends*, and lives to the most *valuable Purposes*, even for the Glory of God, and the Good of the Creature. Before he was sanctified, the great Concern of Life was something *mischievous* or *frivolous*; he set his Heart upon that which *was not*, and he labour- ed in *vain*, a Cypher was his Gain, and a Curse was his Wages; he wasted away Life, and only treasured up Wrath against a day of Wrath, which is the dismal Case of all unconverted Sinners: But now he is quickned by a vital Word, he is concerned about the noblest Objects, and most important Affairs, *the one* Luke 10. *thing needful*, matters of infinite Consequence; he secures to himself the Glories of an Eter- 42. nity, and serves others with the Blessings of Time; he improves his day of Nature and Grace, in perfecting his own Holiness, and in promoting others Happiness; as this holy Activity is *useful to others*, so 'tis most *comfortable to himself*, for hereby he has *inward Peace*, and *outward Confidence*. The Word when it is the power of God to a Soul, gives a *degree of inward Peace*, for it sweetens the comforts of Life, supports under the troubles of Life, removes disturbing Fears, and distracting Cares, it maintains a self-approving Conscience, which

is a continual Feast, it restrains irregular Appetites, calms boisterous Passions, gives a check to rising Lusts, and thereby prevents much Sorrow, either as to *Sin* or *Repentance*; it ministers *Help*, and enlivens *Hope*, as to the removal of Evil, and possession of Good; it oftentimes creates such a delightful sense of the Divine Favour, promotes such refreshing Communion with the Deity, and opens such a bright prospect into the Eternal World, as makes the Man to feel himself *to be alive*, and to find *Life in Life*, by the serenity of his Mind, and the reigning Tranquility of his Spirit; and as he has *inward Peace*, so he has *outward Confidence* towards God, he has a holy humble boldness; *for if our Hearts condemn us* ^{1 John. 3.} *not, then have we confidence towards God*: And ^{21.} towards Man he has a firm assurance of Mind, for the *Righteous are as bold as a Lion*: With the Apostle, if in Disgrace and Distress, by the power of a peaceful Spirit he can speak to a *Festus* or *Agryppa*, *tho' great and noble* without Fear, and with great Compassion, and wish he was such as he is, *excepting the Bonds*. This is ^{Acts 26.} *Life indeed*, when such a holy Activity, Use-^{29.} fulness, Comfort and Courage do's attend it, 'tis surely *Life unto Life*. This is the happy production of the Divine Word, when animated by the Almighty Spirit of Grace.

3. The Phrase *Life unto Life*, may import *renewed encreases of Life*, it may signify that the Life that is the happy fruit of the Gospel Dispensation, is by virtue of the Blessing of that Gospel renewed and encreased, as is most subservient to the glory of God, and the good of the sanctified Soul: It has been already con-
C sider'd,

1 Cor. 3.
21, 22.

sider'd, that the Life of the Word may in some Sense refer to a Life of *Nature, Grace, and Glory*; and as to these 'tis certain that there is by the blessing of the Gospel a suitable renewal and encrease: As to a Natural Life, 'tis said of all that are sanctified by the Word, that *all things are theirs*; amongst the rest, *Life* as well as *Death* is mentioned in that glorious Inventory: *Natural Life* by a Covenant Security, is to be so often and long renewed by vital supplies from the living God, as shall most fully answer the Ends of his Rectoral Constitution, so that no *good Man* can die, let the desire of some, and the design of others, be never so great, till his *Work* is done, and the great End answer'd for which he was number'd amongst the Living, fixt in the Rank of Rational Creatures, and dignified with the Nature and Character of the Sons of God; *Life* is his to receive good in, even the Blessings of the right and left Hand; to do good in, for the Honour of God, the Interest of others, and his own Salvation; to enjoy good in, as the reward of his Labour, reaping the comfortable Harvest of his own sowing, and to prepare for the greater good of the eternal World, that the blessings of one World improving his gratitude and thankfulness, may fit him for the ineffable Glories of another: For these ends Life is the Covenant-blessing secured to every Believer; the Lamp shall be oiled, and shall shine notwithstanding the united power and malice of Earth and Hell, as Godliness has the promise of this Life, if the Oil be not forfeited by Sin, and thereby the Light extinguished; tho' the Life of Man under the

Curse

Curse of the Apostacy, is but precarious Breath, a meer *unpromised vouchsafement*, than which nothing is more uncertain ; for as he do's *forfeit* it every Day, and can't *force* it one single Moment, yet the Lease of the Life of every good Man shall be renewed, his Health and Strength recruited, if for his good, that he may be more serviceable in Time, and more safe and successful as to the depending Concerns of a Glorious Eternity. This is a considerable Blessing, and may be said to be *Life unto Life* ; but the *renewal and encrease of a Spiritual Life* in the use of appointed means is much more so, which is the happy effect of the Word of God. *Spiritual Life* may be consider'd as to *Pardon and Purity*, a Life of Justification and Sanctification ; and as to both these by the Gospel there is a *promised Renewal* : As to *Pardon*, whenever we sin, if with *Peter* we go forth and weep bitterly, so as to leave our Sin, and love our Saviour according to a Gospel Covenant, we may receive a renewed sealed Pardon ; of such wonderful virtue and value is the Blood of a Redeemer, that it *cleanseth from all Sin*: the Sacrifice of Christ, is not like the Sacrifices under the Law, that did but typically cleanse from some Sins, and but at some Times ; but this as infinitely meritorious, purges from the Guilt and Filth of all Iniquity, it *finishes Sin, and brings in an everlasting Righteousness* : Every penitent believing Soul may be assured by his *very Senses*, that his Sins are forgiven, as sure as he *eats the Bread, and drinks the Wine* at the Lords Table, so sure he may be that his Sin is *covered*, and his *Iniquity shall be remembered no*

more, no not perhaps in the day of Judgment, as nothing but what is good is mention'd in the account of that awful Day. What a blessed Life is this, surely 'tis *Life unto Life*, if compared with the Life under the Law; when if any *Man sins, he has an Advocate with the Father*, who pleads Law, as well as Love, Justice as well as Mercy, by virtue of the full Satisfaction he gave to the offended Lawgiver, and must therefore carry the Cause of every penitent Soul, as he *ever liveth to make Intercession* for him, and *as the Father always heareth him*. As to a Life of Purity, this also upon declensions and relapses, is to be renewed by the blessed Spirit; he will *undertake* for the weak Grace, and *restore* the backsliding Soul; though it falls, it shan't fail; the fire of the Temple within, though it be but as a *single Spark*, shall not be extinguish'd; the *bruised Reed* shall be raised, and set in Tune; the *smoking Flax* shall break out at length into a bright refreshing Flame; tho' Grace by us may be *lost*, yet by God it will never be *left*, the *Seed is Incorruptible*: as sown by the Spirit, it will be water'd with the dew of Heaven, and raised by the beams of the Sun of Righteousness, and grow as the Tree of Life; he that drinks of the Water that Christ gives, shall find it *as a well of Water springing up to eternal Life*: They that are holy, shall be enclined and enabled to *perfect Holiness*, they shall be *changed from Glory to Glory*, till at last they shall be presented *faultless, without spot or wrinkle, and blemish, or any such thing*; and when thus perfected and presented, they shall live in the glorious presence of a Redeemer, their *Life of Glory*

Joh 4. 14.

Eph. 5. 27.

Glory, by vertue of a *Covenant Blessing*, as they were *sanctified by the Word*, shall be for ever *renewing*. Death shall prey on the Vitals no more, it shall be for ever swallow'd up in Victory : It makes a universal slaughter and carnage in this World of Sin and Sorrow, it turns the Earth into a general Sepulture, it reigns in all Places, and brings all Sexes, Ages, Degrees, into Captivity, it fills the World with Skulls and Bones, Sighs and Groans ; but in Heaven *Death shall be no more*, Life shall triumph, as gaining the Victory over all the ghastly horrid Attendants of that great and last Enemy ; the Grave shall give up its Prey, and the Devourer shall adorn the Triumph of victorious Life. The life of holy Souls in Heaven, shall by constant renewals be Eternal, they themselves shan't *forfeit* it, and the Life it self shan't *decay*, and others by *force or fraud*, shan't break in upon it ; but *secure* it shall be throughout the endless Ages of Eternity ; in perfect Light, Love and Joy, shall all the Righteous be for ever with their Lord : This is one part of the Life of the Word, as it is Sanctification in this World, and Salvation in the other.

4. The Phrase *Life unto Life*, may import *transcendent Excellency*, if compared with any other *Life*. Brutes and Devils are not here to be considered in the scale of Life ; where there is no Reason, and no Happiness, there can be but little Life ; both the one and the other do live, but the Life of the one, is but a few degrees above Death, and the Life of the other is many degrees worse than Death ; without a measure of Rationality and Felicity, Life must

Life and Death

be very contemptible and inconsiderable, 'tis better not to be, than to be miserable : Upon this account also the *Life of a Sinner* is not to be compared with that Life that is produced and secured by the Divine Word, when animated by the blessed Spirit. A Sinner may boast of *his way of living*, and for a time bless himself in it ; but alas he is miserably mistaken, even to self-delusion and self-destruction ; as his Life is a Life of Sin, so 'tis but little more than *Snare and Slavery, Shame and Sorrow*, it's two great Ingredients are *Brutality and Devilism*, the one doth Disgrace, and the other distress the Human Nature ; the Life of a Worm or Fly on a Dunghil, or of an Ant on a Molehill, is more valuable, as they answer the end of Life ; from such Creatures of the lowest Rank, as well as from an Ox and an Ass, he may learn Wisdom. *Go to the Ant thou Sluggard, and learn to Live ;*

(a) *For active Spirits live alone :*

On oth'rs write, Here lies such an one.

What is there in the Life of a Sinner that is considerable, that deserves the very Name ? Is it not made up of one great *Impertinency*, of constant *Drudgery*, and sometimes of the most *dreadful Agony* ? Do's not every Sinner live to no purpose, yea, which is worse, to a very bad one ? When he pollutes his very Nature, debases his State, diseases his Body, dishonours his God, and destroys himself, when he

do's so fatally *wrong his own Soul*, as to cut off the Entail of Happiness, and sink himself at last into the depths of eternal Misery; well may such Persons by the Verdict of the Word be pronounced *dead*, even *while they live*; their Life is not merely a dying Life, which is the case of a *Man*, but a *dead Life*, that is, the true case of a Sinner as he is dead in Sin: His Life is a Life in *the Flesh*, and a Life of *Flesh*, whereby as he is rotting above-ground, so will he *rot* under-ground, and then *rear* in an everlasting Hell; surely 'tis better to be *dead in Nature*, than *dead in Sin*; for such tho' they live, will one Day wish that they had never been born. (a) *Not to know God, is not to live*; such (b) as don't know and love God, are alienated from the Life of God, which must be the measure of all Perfection: without a Conformity to a living God, there must be Death and Misery, for *this is Life Eternal to know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent*. Upon this account it may be further consider'd, that as the Life of Sin is not to be compared with the Life of a Saint, so the *Life that the legal Dispensation* did require, and reward, was very *imperfect*, as falling vastly short of the *Knowledge, Spirituality, Comfort, and glorious View* of those that live under a Gospel, whose Hearts are renewed by the Word; and upon this account it may most properly be said to be *Life unto Life*. It must be allowed by considering Persons, that the legal Dis-

(a) Deum nescire mori est, Nosse vivere est, Voisin The. Judæor. a common Expression among the Jews,

(b) See my Discourse of the Loving Kindness of God.

penfation was not fo *general*, and fo *Life* then
 not fo *extenfive*, as under the Gospel-Mini-
 Pfal. 76. 2. ftration : The Blessed God *fhewed his Word unto*
 Levit. 20. *Jacob, and his Statutes and Judgments unto Israel.*
 20. That People *was separated from all the People that*
 Exod. 33. *were upon the Face of the Earth* : They were kept
 16. in by a *Partition-Wall*, not allowed Marriage,
 and free Commerce with other Nations ; by
 this Partion they were kept in, and others kept
 out. The Laws and Rites of the Jewish Religion
 were fited to their *particular* Temper, Capa-
 city, and Inclination ; which was, as is re-
 mark'd by the Historian, of all People the moft
 uncouth and fordid. As their Dispensation
 was *particular*, fo 'twas *partial* : The Great God
 did not fpeak his Mind to *all*, nor *all* his Mind
 Heb. 8. 7. to any. The Apoftle tells us, the First Cove-
 Ch. 7. 18. *nant was not blameless* ; the *Law made nothing*
perfect. Under the Legal Miniftration, Ex-
 terior Performances were prefcribed with the
 utmoft Nicety, and inforc'd by heavy Penal-
 ties, while *Moral Duties* were not fo clearly
 explained, nor fully urged ; and fome things
 that are now evil, if they were not before,
 were fecretly permitted, or connived at, as
 Divorce, Polygamy, Revenge, and feveral
 Degrees of Uncharitablenefs ; fo that as *Life*
 was not fo *extenfive*, fo was it not fo *pure* : And
 as under the Legal Dispensation there was not
 fo *bright a Discovery* of the bleffed Eternal World,
 nor the *exprefs Promise* of fo Glorious a Reward,
 nor the *powerful Influence* of the Divine Spirit,
 as is represented and offered under the Gospel.
Life then could not be fo *comfortable* as it may
 be now ; a hard Task was to be performed,
 a heavy Yoke was to be borne, much Treafure

sure was to be expended ; but the Assistance was not *great*, nor Reward *glorious*, if compared with the Gospel, which in an eminent Sense is the *Ministration of the Spirit*, and the *Revelation of Life* ; and surely present Help, and future Hope, sweetens Life, spices the Cup, and makes the Bitter-Draught go down with Pleasure. Upon this Account is the Law call'd the *Ministry of Death and Condemnation*, ^{1 Cor. 3.} a *Subjection to a Curse*, and a *Killing Letter*. Life ^{7.9.} then was a sort of Death ; at best it was but a *Pupillage* ; the best Men were but *Minors*, ^{Gal. 3.10.} under Age, and under Discipline, as the Law ^{2 Cor. 3.6.} was a *School-Master to bring them to Christ*. That Dispensation was not designed for *perpetual Obligation*, and therefore was not made perfect ; it was but a *Shadow* of better Things, ^{Deut. 18.} and a Life in a *Shadow* is but mean. God de- ^{15.} signed to raise up another Prophet like to *Moses*, which should have *Words put into his Mouth*, ^{Acts 3.23.} even the *Words of Eternal Life* ; and another Priesthood, not after the Order of *Aaron*, but *Melchisedec*, (a) and then all Nations and Tongues should come and see his Glory, his Name should be ^{Heb. 6.20.} great among the Gentiles. *Melchisedec* was an ^{Mal. 1.11.} eminent Type of *Christ*, he was King of Righteousness, and King of Peace, as his Name and Title do signifie : Of *Christ* it is said, *Mercy and Truth are met together, and Righteousness and Peace have kissed each other*, ^{Heb. 8.13.} Psal. 85. 11. *Melchisedec* was both King and Priest of the Most High God,

(a) *Judeorum Mos absurdus, sordidusque*, Tacitus, lib. 5. They are said, in Deut. 32. 28. to be a Nation void of Counsel, neither is there any Understanding.

whereas

whereas the Levitical Priesthood had not the Regal Authority joined to it ; for the Royal Dignity appertained to the Tribe of *Judah*, but the Priesthood to that of *Levi* ; now both were *united in Christ*, as he sprang from the Royal Stock of *Judah*, and was made the High-Priest of our Profession. The Levitical Priests were ordained without the Solemnity of an *Oath* ; but our Saviour was consecrated with that Solemnity, *The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the Order of Melchisedec*, Psal. *110.* 4. It is said of *Melchisedec*, that he was *without Father, without Descent, having neither beginning of Days, nor end of Life* ; which Phrases don't signify that he was never born, or never died ; but that there is *no Account* of his Family, Birth, and Death, in History ; which was purposely conceal'd, to render him a fit Type of our Blessed Lord ; for Christ may be said to be *without Father*, in respect of his Humane Nature ; *without Mother*, in regard of his Divine ; *without beginning of Days*, as he is God ; and *without end of Life*, as he is both God and Man. As our High-Priest is greater than the Priests *under the Law*, so is the Life we have by Him. 'Tis Life unto Life, if compared with the Legal Constitution : The First Dispensation was *not faultless*, that there might be *place found for the Second*, which should be not only Life, but *Life unto Life*, as to clear Revelation, strict Obligation, vigorous Exercise, and glorious Perfection : As the Gospel-Life is more excellent than any could be enjoyed under the Law, having more Light, Spirit, and Hope ; so the *very Life of Innocent Adam* in *Paradise*, was not in some sense

so considerable as this Spiritual Gospel Life is. 'Tis certain, our First Parent, when innocent and happy, was every moment liable to Sin and Misery, without any encouraging Promise of Pardon, or renewed Assistance and Acceptance; if he sinn'd, he was to die, and sin he might the next moment, and so sink into Despair; but if we sin, we have Hope, as *we have an Advocate with the Father.* Adam was holy, but his Holiness was not secure; he was neither long, holy nor happy, a single Act put an end to both; but when any are sanctified by the Gospel, they are secured by a Covenant of Grace; so that every Sin does not *alter the State* of the Soul, but as it both admits and requires Repentance, the Soul may enjoy the renewed Favour of God. And 'tis fit also to consider, that the Habit of Grace is secured by the Gospel-Covenant, which is a Blessing that did not grow in *Paradise*: Our Life is *hid with Christ in God*; 'tis *safe* as well as *secret*; we are not trusted with our own Life, Christ is the Vital Head from whence all suitable Supplies are derived, for the Maintenance, Improvement and Perfection of the Spiritual Life; so the Great Apostle apprehended, when he said, *I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.* Gal. 3. 11. Man once lived on his own Stock, and proved Bankrupt; he must now live on the *Fund of another*, to keep him humble, diligent, careful, and thankful, and thereby he is *safe*; he that thus lives, shall never die, he has *Life unto Life*, one Life rising up out of another, and one issuing into another. It may also be added, That if *Adam* had not fell, it does not appear from the Scripture, that the Reward of
of

of his Obedience would have been any thing greater than a Continuance in *Paradise* ; but the Reward of a Spiritual Life under the Gospel is *plainly declared*, and as fully assured to be an Everlasting Heaven. Grace will ripen into Glory, and then is it Life indeed. Thus may it be said, That our Blessed Lord came, not only *that we might have Life, but that we might have it more abundantly* ; a Life of Activity for the Dead, of Pardon for the Guilty, of Liberty for the Enslaved, of Usefulness for the Despised and Disabled, of Holiness for the Polluted, of Comfort for the Distressed, and of Glory for the Condemned. Thus may the Word of God be said most aptly to be the *Savour of Life unto Life* to those whom it sanctifies and saves.

C H A P. II.

The Word to some is the savour of Death unto Death : This represented as to Temporal, Spiritual, and Eternal Death, in several Particulars.

THE Word of God *to some is the savour of Death unto Death* : This will appear to be a very great and awful Truth, if we consider that the Gospel misimproved, has a Tendency to imbitter a *Natural Death*, to encrease a *Spiritual Death*, and to add to the Torments of *Eternal Death*.

I. The

I. The *Word* misimproved, has an aptitude to imbitter a *Natural Death*: We have great reason to think so, if we consider Four Things.

(1.) Our *Guilt* will be much greater than if we had never heard the *Word*, and so *Conscience* will be more apt to accuse and condemn us in a dying Hour. — Our Blessed Lord tells us, That *if we believe not in him, we shall die in our sins*: If so, the greater the Sin is, the greater may the Sorrow be in our last Moments. Certain it is, that *Conscience* is most likely to do its Office in a Day of Sickness, and Hour of Death, *when the Daughters of Musick are brought low*; when we are not hurried by Business, nor diverted by Pleasure: *Conscience* then has more power and leisure to draw up the black Catalogue of our Sins, and charge it home on the Soul: And the Charge it may bring against them that have abused the Grace of the Gospel, will be much heavier than can be brought against any Heathen; for if a Redeemer had not come, then we had had no Sin, but now we have no Excuse for our Sin. *Conscience* can soon tell us, when duly awakened, that the Heathens had but dark Notices of the Deity: But the Lamp of the Lord did shine bright on our Tabernacle. Our Sin will be aggravated by the Brightness of Gospel-Light, and the Endearments of Gospel-Love. When *Conscience* tells me I have made light of the Gospel of Christ, not not considering it to be the Great Reality, the most Rational, Excellent, Momentous Concern, it can then also soon tell me, that my contempt of it, is the vilest Reflexion on the Sacred Trinity,

Trinity, a *making void* the whole Constitution of Grace, a practical *preferring a Devil* before a *Saviour*, and that hereby I am guilty of the most *horrid Self-Murder*; so that my Sin is not only greater than that of Heathens, but in some sense greater than the Sin of *Apostate Adam*, who did not violate such a Covenant of Grace; than the Sin of the *Jews*, who

Acts 3. 17. *through Ignorance crucified the Lord of Glory*; yea, perhaps than the Sin of the *Fallen Angels*, who did not abuse such Gospel-Grace; and when I am thus charged with Guilt, I shall soon

I Cor. 2. 8. find that the *Sting of Death is Sin*. This will add *Death to Death*. Death is terrible, if you consider its Antecedents, Concomitants, and Consequences, such as the Pains of the dissolving Body, the Amazement of a guilty Soul, the violent Separation of Soul from Body, and the removal of both from all the Relations, Enjoyments and Affairs of this Life: But that which makes Death most terrible, is the *Agony of Soul* arising from a condemning Conscience, and accusing Devil. When a Voice within tells me, I have trampled on the tender Bowels of a Redeemer, I have sported my self in the midst of Gospel-Beams, I have sinned be-

Rom. 6. 1. *cause Grace has abounded*, I have had fair Opportunities of Grace, frequent Offers of Mercy, loud and repeated Calls from the Word of

Heb. 2. 3. God: But alas! I have neglected the *great Salvation*: This surely may make me cry out with the utmost Astonishment, How shall I escape? I am now dying, there are but a few Breaths more between me and Eternal Torments; I shall never enjoy one Sabbath, one Sermon more, one Season of Grace more; for

for 'tis now said to me, *Time shall be no more.* Rev. 10. 6.
Oh, wretched Creature! in dying I must die;
the Word of God is to me Condemnation, and
'tis not in the power of Ten thousand Worlds
to prevent my Eternal Execution.

(2.) The *Word* misimproved, will imbitter
a Natural Death, as it gives a clear and cer-
tain Account of a *Place or State of Torment*
after Death. ——— Had we never heard or
read the Gospel, we could but guess at the
Invisible World, the Future State of Happiness
and Misery. The wisest Heathens had but
dark and doubtful Notions of a State after
Death; many of them thought they should
cease to be, (a) and therefore often chose
Death, as a Relief to the Troubles of Life.
Socrates himself did not know whether Death
was good or evil; the utmost that they seem
to have arrived to, was to conclude, that Death
would either extinguish or change their Being;
if it did change, they hoped it might be for
the *better*; and if it did extinguish it, they were
sure it could not be for the *worse*, and this
ministred to their Comfort in their dying Mo-
ments. But we who live under the Gospel,
have *Life and Immortality brought to light*; the 2 Tim. 1.
dark Vail that hid the Future World, is drawn 10.
aside by the Hand of a Redeemer, and the
awful Realities of the Eternal State are *set in*
view to an Eye of Faith; what was Darkness
before, is now comparatively as a *Sun-Beam*:

(a) Gigni pariter cum corpore & unâ
Crescere sentimus, pariterque senescere mentem ———
Post mortem nihil est. *Lucret. lib. 3.*

The Hidden Things are made to appear as *Light* ; what before was doubtful, is now made most sure and certain. This must add to the Bitterness of Death, when I shall consider, according to the bright and unerring Light of Scripture, there is a *Tophet*, a Place prepared for Devils, and Damned Spirits, a general Receptacle for Guilty Condemned Souls, where Storms of Divine Vengeance fall, the Viols of Wrath are poured out, and where a Fire is enkindled by the Breath of the Deity for the Glory of Divine Fury and Justice : The more express and particular the Word is, the more full of Terror must my Soul be, when it tells me what Persons are condemned already to that Place of Torment, as *Judas* and *Dives* ; and my Conscience may soon say, I am *such an one*, an impenitent Abuser of Gospel-Grace : Oh, how deep will the Sting of Death then enter ? Darkness and Doubt would give some Relief. When by the Light of the Word, I see the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, and my Spirit within tells me I deserve to be cast into it, and the Crack of dissolving Nature assures me I am just at the Brink of it, what amazing Horrors must fill the Soul ? how will the miserable Creature curse the Day of its Birth, when it sees nothing before it but Eternal Death !

(3.) The *Word misimproved* will imbitter a Natural Death, as it fully assures us what *Sort of Persons* will inevitably be condemned to this State of Torment : — Not only the Certainty of the Place, but of the Persons condemned to that Place of Torment, will add Bitterness to a Departing Soul that has abused Gospel-

Gospel-Grace : The Word of God assures us, that the Wicked *shall be cast into Hell* ; and that we may not mistake who are the Wicked, it gives a Black-List, such as the *Unbelieving, Im-¹ Cor. 6. penitent, Hypocritical, Profane, Worldly, Sensual, Proud, Contentious, 9, 10. are the condemned Persons : The Consideration of this, will direct and solicit Conscience to accuse such Sinners, hereby I may soon see my self *mark'd out* for Eternal Ruine, having the very Signature of the Damned on my Soul, I may be forced, by irresistible Light to own my self condemned by that Word which I have despised, and shall therefore be Cast at the Bar of God : And how dreadful will it be to have such a Self-condemning Spirit ? especially if the Soul considers that the Misery to which it is self-condemned is *Eternal* ; for so is it asserted in Scripture, and we have therefore as much reason ^{Mat. 25.} to believe *Death* to be Everlasting as *Life*, as ^{46.} they are so often in the Word of God joined together. Whatever the vain Reasonings of some may argue against the Eternity of Hell-Torments, the Mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, the Goodness of God doth not forbid it, the Justice of God doth admit it, and the Veracity of God doth require it ; nothing can be more fully and firmly asserted, according to the various Phrases of the (a) *Greek Language*, than a State of Endless Misery, as the Punishment of Impenitent Sinners ; this is what the Wicked can't escape, but must endure : How unspeakably dreadful must the*

(a) See Dr. Hammond, Dr. Whitby.

inward Sense of this be, when the Soul finds it self, according to the Word of God, in a dying Hour, to be *such* a Sinner? and this is certainly more likely to be the Case of them that die under the Gospel, than of those that never attended on the Means of Grace.

4. It may imbitter a Natural Death, as by our Misimprovement of the Gospel, God may be justly provoked to permit the Devil to *perplex* and distress us in our last Moments. — As the Devil is a Tempter, so he is a Tormenter; as he tempts to Sin, so he tempts to Despair; as an Accuser, he may justly be permitted to suggest to *such* Sinners, that their Sin is greater than can be forgiven, that 'tis in vain for them to repent, as they are sealed up for Destruction; he may tell them that God is an inexorable Judge, no Price, no Entreaty will avail, but he will *mock at their calamity, and laugh now their fear is come upon them*: And will not such Suggestions as these imbitter Death? The Character that is given of Satan, in the Word of God, assures us, that he is both able and willing thus to perplex a Soul. The greatness of the Guilt, in neglecting and abusing Gospel-Grace, makes it reasonable to suppose the provoked Deity may permit him so to do; and the horrid Outcries of some (*a*) Souls, in their dying Hours, makes it as reasonable to suppose that he has done so; and what he has done and can do, he may soon do: As a Spirit, he may have access to the Soul; and as a malicious Spirit, he is ready to torment

Psal. 2.
Prov. 1.
26.

(a) As Francis Spira, &c.

it before the time ; and when it doth, the Soul will find, that dying under a Gospel, is Death unto Death ; it will wish it had never heard the Words of Life, for the Misimprovement of the Gospel will greaten its Sense of its deserved Eternal Punishment. It must be owned, there have been many Sinners that have not (tho' they have abused Gospel-Grace) thus tasted the Bitterness of Death, which must be ascribed partly to their great *Infidelity*, not believing a Future-State of Rewards and Punishments ; partly to *Bodily Distemper*, that has prevented clear Thought, and close Reflexion ; partly to *Satan's blinding their Eyes*, that they might not see their Danger ; and partly to a *judicial Hardness* inflicted on them by the Hand of God, as a just Punishment for past Sins : But yet it must be acknowledged, if Thought is not hindred, and Conscience judicially feared, there is a mighty aptitude in the abuse of the Word of Grace, to imbitter a Soul when it shall leave its Body, and thereby it becomes *the savour of Death unto Death*.

II. The *Word misimproved*, is the *savour of Death unto Death*, as it doth encrease a *Spiritual Death*. Sin, in Scripture is represented not only as *Death* in its Consequence, but in its very Nature : As some are said to be *dead in Tres-* Eph. 1. 1.
passes and Sins, and *she that liveth in pleasure is* 1 Tim.
dead whilst she lives : If the Word of God doth 5. 6.
not produce Life, as the Instrument of Conversion, it doth very often encrease this Death of Sin. In Death may be consider'd *Darkness, Insensibility, Stifness, and Loathsomness* : And in Spiritual Death there is something that

answers to these, that may be increased by the abused Word of God : As the Soul may be render'd more ignorant , stupid, incapable of Spiritual Action and Enjoyment, and thereby render'd more offensive to the Eye of an holy, jealous God.

1. When the Gospel has not a vital effect on the Soul, the *Blindness* of the Mind is often encreased ; — if the Truth is not received in the love thereof, God may *send strong Delusions*, that Persons shall believe a Lie, *that they may be damned who believe not the Truth, but have pleasure in Unrighteousness* ; if we shut our Eyes against the Light, our Darkness may thicken to the very blackness of Darkness : voluntary Ignorance is the criminal Cause of Judicial Blindness, and misimproved Knowledge is often punished with Spiritual Darkness. For Judgment says our blessed Lord *am I come into the*
- Joh. 9 19. *World, that they which see not might see, and they which see may be made blind* ; that is, that they who are sensible of their Ignorance might have saving Knowledge ; and they who as the Pharisees, were proud of their Understanding, and did not follow and improve the light of the Word, might be judicially darkened. Thus
- Rom. 11.8. the *Jews* had a *Spirit of Slumber*, prevailing amongst many ; and the *Gentiles* when they sinned against natural Light, and imprisoned the *Truth in Unrighteousness*, and *did not like to retain God in their Knowledge*, were given up to
- Rom. 1. 28. a *Reprobate Mind*, a Mind void of Judgment, that could not fully and constantly discern between Good and Evil. 'Tis not to be supposed that any Delusions are so sent by God, as that he doth *inspire* into any the least Evil,

or

or *incline* or *excite* them to Evil, or any way *necessitate* them to Sin : This is contrary to the purity and benignity of his Nature, and the sincerity of his Declaration ; but he doth permit Satan to deceive and delude the guilty Soul , that *loves Darkneß rather than Light* — They that are not practically directed by the Word of God, must be self-deluded, as they reject *the Truth* ; so is the Gospel of Christ emphatically *stiled the Truth of God, the Word of Truth*. The Knowledge of it, is said to be *the Knowledge of the Truth*, and the Belief of it, *the Belief of Truth* ; so that to despise and neglect this, is to promote our own Darkness and Delusion : If the Gospel *be hid*, 'tis said *to be hid to them that are lost* : the Gospel is not hid as to external Declaration, but it is often a hidden Gospel, as to *internal Manifestation* : As the Understanding is not duly inlightned, and the Will and Executive Powers not duly directed and excited by it ; when it is so the Soul is *lost*, both as to *Sin* and *Misery* : What is *necessary* to promote its Salvation is then *wanting*, such as the Belief of the Truth, and what doth *promote* its Destruction is then *present*, as wilful Ignorance, and allowed Indisposedness for God, both as to Action, and Fruition, which may justly provoke God to leave the Soul to its own blindness, and at last cast it into outward Darkness, and then is it lost for ever. The blessed God in great Compassion has given us his Word to be a *Light to our Feet, and a Lantern to our Paths* ; but if thro' Pride or Prejudice, we do not value and observe it, we increase our Ignorance, by preventing the Success of that great Mean, that was mercifully

fully appointed to promote spiritual saving Knowledge. It may be said of many under the Gospel, who are wise in their own Conceits, what the Moralist says of some, that their seeming *Knowledge*, promoted their real Ignorance.

2. It increases spiritual Death, as the *Insensibility* of the Soul is hereby often promoted — If the Soul is not awakened by the alarm of the Word preached, by degrees it grows more stupid ; if it is not softened by the mollifying means of Grace, it becomes more obdurate : They that continue dead in Sin, under vital Ordinances at length are past feeling ; if Conviction do's not issue in Reformation, it often ends in spiritual Stupefaction. Many under the most softning means, like the common Anvil, are hardned by repeated Hammerings. This hardness in Scripture is represented by a *Stone* that is not imprest, by *Iron* that do's not melt, and a *callous Foot*, that by Travelling becomes more hard and horny : The Apostle represents it by a *Spirit of Slumber*, the Prophet by a *deep Sleep*, and our blessed Lord by the Hearts *waxing gross*, and Ears being dull of hearing : That many thus have been hardned by their base Neglects and Misimprovements, Experience doth sadly testify : some have been warmed by a serious Discourse, who, like heated Iron, have grown cold again, and thereby become much more inflexible : it has been with the Hearts of many, as

Ezek. 36.
26.
Matth. 13.
15.

Puto Multos potuisse ad Sapientiam pervenire, nisi putassent se pervenisse, *Seneca*.

with

with the Body of the Drunkard, under the hewings of the Prophets—*They have stricken me*, Prov. 23. *and I was not Sick, they have beaten me, and I felt it not.* Ask the Question as you read these Lines, whether it has not been thus with thy Soul? Can't I remember, Oh my Soul! when Sin was a heavy Load under which my Spirit did groan; but now my Shoulder do's not sink under it; that which before was as a Mountain ready to crush me, touches me now as light as the Grasshopper: The kind and loud Invitations of a Redeemer did once affect me, but now I am deaf to the voice of the Charmer: The Threatnings of the Word as a flash of Fire, did startle and surprize me, but now I can sleep securely under the threatenng sparks of Eternal Fire; the represented Glories of an everlasting Heaven did allure my Love, and enliven my Hope, and inspirit my Endeavours; but I can now hear of it, and be as little affected, as with the passing Splendour of a Tinsy-shew: My Conscience some years since was as a green Wound, that made me feel the smart of Sin; but now by a Custom in Sin, 'tis as Flesh hardned by Fire, (a) seared *with a red hot Iron*; 'twas as a roaring Lion, that made me tremble when I neglected Duty, or stretched out my Hand to Iniquity; but now as a despicable worm, I can tread it under my Foot, and then sin without

(a) Κεκαυτημεναι τὴν ἰσχυρὰν Συνείδησιν, signifies those who have a hard or brawny Conscience cauterized; as in Surgery a Limb is cut off, and the part seared with a hot Iron, which in time contracts such a Crust, that tho' it be cut, it neither bleeds nor feels. Jos. Mede Apost.

Regret and Shame : 'Tis a melancholy Truth, that the awakening voice of Conscience by being neglected, like the return of an Eccho, has sounded less and less, till at last it has drop't into Silence, and then the Sinner has been insensible under the guilt of the vilest Enormities, and most flagitious Impieties.

3. By the Misimprovement of the Word, a Soul has been rendred less capable of Spiritual *Action and Enjoyment* ; thereby Spiritual Death has been encreased — In Death there is not only Darkness and Insensibility, but a *Stifness*, whereby the Person is incapable of Operation and Fruition ; and so in Spiritual Death the Soul is destitute of the love of God, which is the great Principle of Action and Enjoyment, whereby it can neither act for God, nor take delight in him : And as there is not only *Stifness*, but at length *Putrefaction* in a dead Body, so in Spiritual Death the Soul becomes more *corrupt*, as the power of Sin doth encrease : The Apostle speaks of the *reviving of Sin*, as it takes *occasion to work all manner of Concupiscence*. Thus when our blessed Lord preach't the Gospel, some were *filled with Wrath* ; and the *Pharisees* when they were not convinced by the Words and Works of Christ, they maliciously ascribed his whole management to the Power of Satan : The Hearers of holy *Stephen* were so enrag'd, as to gnash their Teeth. Thus do various Lusts rise up in a Soul dead in Sin, as Worms in a putrid Carcass ; and this is indeed *Death unto Death*, when spiritual Physicians and Medicines thro' the prevailing power of inward Corruption, encrease the Distemper ; as the glorious Sun
that

Rom. i.
8, 9.

Matth. i. 24.

Luk. 4. 28.

that ripens the Fruit, draws forth the stench of a Dunghil; so the Light and Love of the Gospel, shall only affect the Rage and Malice of corrupt Nature. Thus many that have *begun in the Spirit, have ended in the Flesh*; Galat. 3.3. and many a shining warm Professor, has prov'd a black, malignant Apostate.

4. As the Consequence of all, the Soul by degrees becomes more *offensive* to the Deity—As in Death there is Darkness, Insensibility, Stifness, and Putrefaction, so as the Fruit of all there is a *Loathsomness*; and thus in Spiritual Death, as Sin putrifies and corrupts the Mind by alienating it from God, the Soul must become more *offensive* to the Eye of a Holy, Jealous God: Sin in Scripture is compared to the most offensive Things, as *Vomit*, and a *menstruous Rag*, to represent how loathsome it is to the Eye and Nostril of the Almighty; and therefore the greater is the power of Sin and prevalency of Corruption, the more must God be offended with the Sinner; he will look on such a Soul with the greater *Abhorrence*; of such it may be said in a more heightned Sense, what is asserted concerning a covetous Person, they are those *whom the Lord abhors*; and the longer such Ps. 10.3. Persons continue vile and wicked by misimproving the Word of God, the abhorrence of the Deity may be supposed to encrease towards them. How dreadful then is the Case of such a Soul, to be abhorr'd by its Maker, its Benefactor, its Judge: To have my Breath and Being, and all my Comforts in the Hand of One that abhors me, and can in a Moment destroy me, is a Curse inexpressibly Tremendous:

dous : What Heart can bear so horrid a Thought ? If it would but consider its most *awful Consequence* of being frown'd and spurn'd by him that gave it being into everlasting Torments, with Abhorrence and Detestation ? The great God do's not indeed abhor a Sinner as a *Creature*, no, he delights in the Works of his own Hands ; but as a *Malignant Creature*, he must be the Object both of his *Hatred* and *Contempt*, and then is the Soul *dead* indeed, and the misimproved *Wird* of God in a Spiritual Sense, is to it, *Death unto Death*.

III. 'Tis the Saviour of *Death unto Death*, as our misimprovement of it will encrease our *Eternal Death*.

'Tis reasonable to suppose, that the Punishment of those that abuse the Gospel, will be unspeakably greater, than the Punishment of others that never heard it : the Abusers of Gospel Grace will be cast into the very *blackness of Darkeness* ; all Sinners deserve to be beaten with the Iron Rod of Sin-avenging Anger, but such will be beaten *with many Stripes* ; if he that despised Moses Law died without Mercy, of how much *soerer Punishment* shall they be thought worthy, who tread under foot the Blood of a Redeemer, and count it an *unholy Thing* ? It must be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of Judgment, than for such ; their End must be unspeakably dreadful : the great Apostle seems to want a Word to express it by, when he says, *What shall the End of those be that obey not the Gospel*. 'Tis above the capacity of Men or Angels, fully to represent the bitterness of this Death, who amongst the Children of Men, can fully

Luke 12.

47.

Heb. 10.

29.

Mark. 6. 11.

1 Pet. 4. 17.

fully describe the Regions of eternal Darkness, and tell us how deep is the Lake of Fire prepared for impenitent Sinners? How fierce the Flame, how great the Rage, how exquisite the Torment, and how loud are the howlings of the Damned? This dreadful Punishment, is represented in Scripture by the most terrible Images, such as Sense can't yet feel, Imagination paint, or Thought conceive; not only beyond what we *feel*, but what we can expressly *fear*; for what we don't fully know, we can't neither fully desire or fear. It must certainly therefore in some Sense, be more dreadful in the dying Agony of our Blessed Lord on the Cross; for he as an innocent Person could not feel the pangs of a Self-condemning Conscience, which is one of the bitter Ingredients of the Cup of Damnation; and besides his Pains, though unspeakably great, were but for a few Hours; but the Punishment of these Abusers of the Gospel-grace will be Everlasting: This will be the *final display* of Divine Justice, Power, and Vengeance, whereby the Deity will glorifie himself in the full Conviction, and entire confusion of Implacable Enemies. Such will fall *into the hands of the living God*, whose abused Grace and Patience will solicit Vengeance, to tear them *in pieces so as that none shall deliver*; then is the Deity represented in his Word, as one *that mocks and laughs at them*. Which Phrase, I think, is peculiarly apply'd to this *dreadful Circumstance*, and seems to import *irreconcilable Anger*, according to the expressi- on of the Prophet Ezekiel; *I will deal in fury, my Eye shall not spare, neither will I have Pity; and though they cry in my Ears with a loud Voice,*

yet

Malachi
2. 9.

Prov. 9. 12.

yet will I not bear them. And not only *Anger*, but *holy Contempt and Scorn*; they despised a gracious God, therefore will he make them contemptible, and cause them to feel the weight of those words, *If thou scornest, thou shalt bear it*; and it seems to import not only *Scorn*, but *shameful Upbraiding*, as our blessed Lord upbraided the *Cities* because they repented not, which referred both to their Sin, and Folly, as Matter of Shame: And to say no more, the Phrase, as far as is consistent with the Glory of the Divine Goodness, seems to import *Self-delighting Vengeance*; inasmuch as by this most awful Punishment, the Threatnings of God are fulfilled, his Holiness vindicated, his Justice and Power glorified, and the impenitent Sinner, after the abuse of the most apt and merciful Methods appointed for his Salvation, made to know the Greatness of his Majesty, the Jealousy of his Nature, and Perfection of that Being whom he so often thought was such a one as himself. To this most tremendous Case may be aptly applied the terrible Words of God delivered by the Prophet, —

Ezek. 5.
11, 13.

Because you have done these things, therefore will I also diminish thee, neither shall my eye spare, neither will I have pity: My anger shall be accomplished, and I will cause my fury to rest upon thee, and I will be comforted.

We may suppose, that the Miserable in Hell will be capable of reflecting on their past State and Condition; that their Consciences, tho' now seared, will be thoroughly awakened in that Place of Torment, they will lift up those Eyes in Hell which they now shut; they will know something at least of the Happiness of others,

others, and will accordingly envy their Felicity, and in the midst of their own Misery will be very desirous of Relief and Recovery : So much may be supposed, if we consider the Parable of the *Rich Man* and *Lazarus*, and other Scriptures ; and if so, the Misimprovement of the Word of God, by the Abuse of Gospel-Grace, will encrease the eternal Misery of such Sinners, if we consider a few Things. Luke 16.

I. Condemned Sinners, to whom the *Word*, by their Misimprovement, becomes *the savour of Death unto Death*, may fully know in a State of Torment, that they were once in a State of gracious *Trial*, and might have prevented the Misery which now they must endure for ever. An awakened Conscience will soon make the distressed Sinner cry out, I am now in Hell, but I was once on Earth ; I had a bright, if not long, Day of Grace, a fair Opportunity for Salvation, in which I might have faithfully and industriously improved the appointed Means of Grace, that had a sufficient aptitude to promote my Holiness, and Eternal Happiness, and then was a merciful God ready to succeed such Endeavours with his spiritual Influence ; but, Fool that I was, I *neglected the great Salvation* ; I had many free Offers, gracious Invitations, loud Calls from the Word, the Providence, the Spirit of God ; but I *made light of it* : Alas, I had then many Pleas and Excuses, but my Conscience now tells me, I might have been saved by Gospel-Grace, for I had no more internal Indisposition, and met with no more external Opposition than others, who had an evil Heart to betray them, a tempt-

Heb. 2. 3.

Mat. 22. 5.

a tempting World to ensnare them, frail Flesh to entangle them, and a subtle Devil to seduce them, as well as I, and yet are saved ; I had the same Blood of Atonement to fly to, the same Spirit of Grace to assist me, the same Promises to quicken me, the same Threatnings to awaken me, the same bright Examples to direct and excite me, and the same glorious Rewards to encourage me, but *all in vain*, I was not wise for *my self*, and my Sun is now set, my Glass run out, my State fix'd ; as I was my own Deceiver, so now must I be for ever my own Tormentor. Oh, Amazing Reflexion ! Oh, Horrid Review !

2. Such Sinners may not only know that their Misery might have been prevented by improved Grace, but they may also know the real *Cause* of its not being prevented.

Ezek. 33. Nothing is more certain, than that God
 11. delights not in the *Death of Sinners* ; if any
 & 18. 32. credit is to be given to the *Oath of the Eternal Jehovah*, the very *Life of the Deity* is Security for this comfortable *Truth*. 'Tis as certain that the Redeemer of the World is both able and willing to save those that come unto him :
 1 Tim 1. *This is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation* ; no Truth can more highly deserve our Credit and Approbation, the Assent of the Understanding, and Consent of the Will :
 15. And 'tis not less certain, that appointed Saving Means are sufficiently apt to promote the Salvation of considering, praying, striving Souls ; so that a Sinner, in a State of Torment, will be under a necessity of accusing himself, as the immediate Cause of his own Misery ;
 he

he will charge himself with such Omissions and Commissions, as will aggravate his Folly, and heighten his Torment; and so his *Sin*, which is not now consider'd, will be *ever before him*. In this State of Torment, the *Ignorant* will know that they did not use and improve the Means of Knowledge; the *Infidel* will remember that he did not study and consider Gospel-Arguments, with a design and desire to be convinced of the Reality and Importance of the great Truths *as they are in Jesus*; but by Pride, Sloth, and a Vain-imagination, promoted his damning Infidelity. The *Hypocrite* will remember his deceitful Dress, the *Swearer* his Profaneness, the *Lascivious Person* his Lust, the *Liar* his Falshood, the *Proud Man* his Vanity, the *Oppressor* his Injustice, the *Covetous Wretch* his beloved Mammon; the remembrance of this, must add Bitterness to Eternal Death, Oil to the devouring Fire; it will make Misery the more exquisite and intolerable; then will *Conscience* make a dreadful Repetition of the Word of God, and say to the miserable Self-Deceiver, *Thou hast sinned against God, and so wronged thy own Soul; Thou hast hated Him, and loved Death*. Some are ready to dispute this Matter on Earth, but none will be able to disprove it in Hell: It will be found, to the eternal Shame and Sorrow of the Abusers of Gospel-Grace, that *the Wages of Sin is Death*, Rom. 6. and that Damnation is the Effect and Consequence of their own Corruption.

3. Such Sinners will not only know the immediate Cause of their Misery, but (which will add to their Torment) they will also know that some Persons who lived under a Gospel-Dispensation

Luke 15.
28.

sation are eternally saved. It is represented in Scripture as an Aggravation of the Condemnation of impenitent Sinners, *that they shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of Heaven, and they themselves shut out, and thereupon shall be weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth.* It can't be easily question'd but that the apprehended Happiness of some, will encrease the real Misery of others ; it will raise Envy, and thereby wrack the Soul. Sinners shall consider, (for there is no doubt but in a State of Torment, the Thought of the most Secure and Obdurate will be awakened and engaged) that they enjoyed the same Means of Grace as others did, read the same Bible, heard perhaps the same Ministers, and sat in the same Sanctuary ; and yet while such are unspeakably happy, they are in the depths of Misery : Such a Reflexion will be as Fuel to the Eternal Fire. *Conscience* may soon tell such, that they scoffed at those Ministers who might have been to them Instruments of Salvation, as *the Servants of the Most High God*, while others valued their Message, and improved their sacred Ministrations ; they neglected and jested at the *Holy Book*, when to others, by serious Meditation, it proved to be the Book of Life ; they trifled away that precious Time, by Hurries and Diversions, which others spent in warm Supplication, and serious Meditation ; they slept in the House of God, and so *caught their Death*, when others received the Word with an attentive Ear, and chearful Heart, and pondered the Things which they did hear, and thereby promoted their own Spiritual and Eternal Life ; then will the awakened Spirit see

see the amazing difference between such Persons and themselves, to their eternal Horror and Amazement. Alas, while others shine in the Light of Eternal Glory, they are covered with thick Darkness ; while others triumph in the blissful Presence of their glorified Redeemer, they are cast out of his Presence with the utmost Contempt and Abhorrence ; while they eat the Bread of Life, and drink of the Rivers of Pleasure at the Right-Hand of God, these condemned Wretches must eat the Bread of Sorrow, and drink of the Cup of Eternal Fury ; while they sing the Song of the Lamb in everlasting Raptures, these miserable Creatures must roar and rage, in inexpressible Tortures of Soul and Body, and that for ever : Such a View and Comparison as this, will be part of the *dreadful Sting* of Eternal Death.

4. It may add to the Misery of such Sinners, to find that they shall be condemned by *Fellow-Creatures* who improved those Means that they neglected. — As Jesus-Christ, God-Man, is the Judge of the World ; so all the Saints, as Co-Assessors, (a) will approve the Sentence of the Judge, let the Relation in

1 Cor. 6. 2.

(a) The Saints shall judge the World. *Its immediate Sense may be supposed to be, that there shall be Christian Magistrates, according to the Prophecy of Isaiah, Isa 49. 23 and of Dan. chap 7. 18. The Saints of the most High shall take the Kingdom ; or, that the Saints shall condemn the World, by the Faith preached to them, as Noah did, Heb. 11. 7. They are said to judge Angels : so they did when the Prince of the World was cast out, Mark 16. 17. John 12. 31. — but yet they will concur, if not as Assessors, with the Judgment of Christ, when the nearest Relative shall be condemned.*

Mat. 19.
28.

Mat. 25.

this World be never so near, and the Person never so dear. When the Great Judge of Life and Death shall pronounce those Soul-astonishing words, *Go ye Cursed*; all the Saints will formally or virtually say, *Let it be so for ever*. Natural Affection may encline and prompt to Compassion and ready Assistance; but yet Grace will conquer Nature, and the Will of the Redeemed, will be entirely swallowed up in the Will of the Redeemer; and so the tender Mother will condemn her beloved Off-spring, the faithful Master his treacherous Servant, the loving Wife her nearest Relative, without Regret and Sorrow; as the Glory of God will be dearer to them than their own Grandeur, or any thing else, they will all say *Amen* to the condemning Sentence: And this will add to their Eternal Misery.

5. It will encrease their Misery, to find that he that was once their greatest *Friend*, will then appear as their greatest *Enemy*. He who once held forth the Sceptre of Mercy, and invited Sinners, with Bowels of Compassion, to come to him and live, will now swear in his Wrath, that *Vengeance is his, and he will repay it*; he that humbled himself, so as to take upon him the Nature of Man, and not of Angels, the Nature of Man when corrupted and disgraced, the Nature of Man when of *no Reputation*, yea, the very *Likeness* of sinful Man, that he might live as a Servant, and die as a Slave; for this great End, that Souls might not perish, will now exalt himself, in taking vengeance on his abused Condescensions. He who took our Nature upon him to save it, will in the same Nature condemn and destroy it: The Mouth
of

Phil. 2. 7.

of Blessing will pronounce the everlasting Curse ; the bleeding, sighing, dying Saviour, will appear as an unrelenting Judge, and implacable Enemy ; he that endured the very Wrath of God to prevent their Ruine, will now with his *own Hand* pour out the Vials of Divine Wrath on them ; and thus the Death of Christ will imbitter their Eternal Death, and the Blessings of his despised Gospel will encrease their everlasting Agonies.

6. It will encrease their Misery, when they find that he that *tempted* them in one World, will *torment* them in the other. As Satan is Rev. 12. a Deceiver, so he is an Accuser and Tor- 10.mentor ; and this must enrage a condemned Soul beyond all Expression, to be tormented by one that deceived him with false Promises : Every impenitent Abuser of Gospel-Grace doth practically credit the Father of Lyes, and give the Lye to the God of Truth, by preferring the Honours, Profits and Pleasures of this World, before the important Concerns of Eternity. What a dreadful Mistake will it appear to be to a condemned Sinner, when all the Glory of this World shall vanish as a Shadow, and in an Eternal State he shall find God to be *true* to his *Threatnings*, and the Devil *false* to all his *Promises* ; when he shall find, after all the Allurements of Satan, the Result of his own Sin is nothing less than eternal Shame and Sorrow. How far the Devils may upbraid and insult over such Fools, I can't determine ; but it must make their Case the more deplorable, to find that the *Deceiver is the Destroyer* ; that he that promised Glory in one World, shall be with the greatest Malice

concerned in the dreadful Punishments of the other. Put all this together, and the Word of God becomes, in the most dreadful sense, *the savour of Death unto Death*. Of such Persons I may say with reference to themselves, what the (a) Historian says of *Augustus Cæsar* with reference to others, *it had been better he had never been born, or had never died*.

Thus have I considered the dark as well as bright Part of the Text, to encrease our Hopes, and awaken our Fears ; not to promote Despair in any Soul, but to prevent it in all, by serious Meditation, warm Supplication, and vigorous Application. We may now say, that the Word of God is like the *Waters of Jealousy* under the Law, which when drank, did either swell the Belly, and rot the Thigh, or else improve Health, and encrease Strength ; it was to every Person either Rottensness or Recovery, it did kill or cure all : And thus the Word of God preach'd and heard, will either prove Salvation or Damnation to every Soul ; it will raise up to the highest Heaven, or sink into the deepest Hell.

(a) Suetonius, if I mistake not.

C H A P. III.

Wherein is considered, in part, what is the Reason or Cause of the words being the Saviour of Death unto Death to any.

III. **A**CCORDING to the proposed Method, I proceed to consider, *what is the Cause or Reason of the words, proving to some the Saviour of Death unto Death.* In considering this very momentous Point, I shall endeavour to vindicate the Wisdom, Justice, and Goodness of God, and expose and condemn *the Sin and Folly of Man*, in several Propositions.

I. It can't reasonably be supposed, that the Gospel it self is the immediate Cause of so dreadful an Effect. In the Word of God there can be no *causal Tendency* to Death and Ruin: As we fell from God by Sin, we were justly exposed to Misery; and therefore it seems to be one of the vilest Reflections on the Deity, to suppose, that under a Pretence of Recovering and Saving us, the Great God should appoint any Means that had a natural or instituted Tendency to our Destruction. What need could there be of such a fatal Institution, when by Law we were condemned before? We must therefore suppose that the Institutions of God are proper

Means of Life and Salvation, and accordingly
 Rom. 1. 16. the Word of God is said to be *the Gospel of Sal-*
 Heb. 2. 3. *vation, and the great Salvation* ; and we are
 Luke 9. 56. assured that our Blessed Lord *came not to destroy*
 1 Cor. 1. 24. *Mens Lives, but to save them*. Salvation is the
 great Design of the Gospel, as it is both the
Wisdom and Power of God. If we consider the
 Contents of the Gospel, and the Account it
 gives of Persons and Things, we shall have
 reason enough to look on it as an happy
 Medicine, in whose Ingredients there is no
 Poison to kill and destroy : It is indeed a *dead*
Letter, as it doth not without the vital Influence
 of the Spirit *give Life*, and as it doth serve to
condemn those that do despise or oppose it ; for
 by this *Word* impenitent Sinners are *judged to*
Death ; but this Death is the Fruit of Sin, and
 not the Effect of the Gospel ; there is nothing
 in the Gospel of Christ that *tempts* to Sin,
 or *tends* to Sin, and therefore nothing that is
 the proper Cause of Death. Are not the
 Commands of the Gospel spiritual ? They not
 only compass the *whole Line of Life*, but they
 enter the very Centre of the Heart, requiring
 Psal 51. 6. *Truth in the inward Parts*, forbidding the very
Conception of Lust, lest at length it should *bring*
forth Death. Are not its Dehortations against
 Sin most powerful and awakening ? and its
 Exhortations to Holiness most alluring and
 engaging ? Are not the Threatnings of the
 Gospel design'd so to startle us, as that we
 may see our Danger, and prevent our Ruin ;
 and the Promises of the Gospel design'd to
 invite and encline us to the Paths of Holiness,
 which are *Paths of Peace* ? We are to know the
Terrors of the Lord, that we may be perswaded
 to

to deny all Ungodliness, and Worldly Lusts ; and we have many rich and precious Promises for this great End, that we may cleanse our selves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit, and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. We have in the Word of God represented to us the ineffable Joys of Heaven, to encourage our Sanctification ; and the inexpressible Torments of Hell, to prevent growing Corruption : The Life of Christ is represented as an holy Example to regulate our Practice ; and the Death of Christ, as a powerful Motive to promote our Repentance. The Grace of the Gospel is discover'd to bring us to God ; nothing can be more apt than Gospel-Light and Love to soften and sanctifie the most obdurate Spirit ; if therefore Light hath not a tendency to Darkness, Love to Destruction, Peace to Confusion, Harmony to Discord, Life to Death, then the Gospel of Christ can have no causal Influence on the Ruin of Immortal Souls, for 'tis said to be *Light, Love, Peace, Life, and Salvation*. This is the most apt Meen or Instrument to promote our Sanctification and Salvation ; so that if we believe not Moses and the Prophets, neither should we be perswaded tho' one rose from the dead. No Meen can have a greater Tendency to Life, than the Word of Grace. What the great Moralist (a) said of Philosophy, is most applicable to the Word of God, that it cultivates the Mind, cures the diseased Soul, directs the Life, and thereby is the greatest Gift of the Gods to poor Mortals ; if any

2 Cor. 5.
11.
2 Cor. 7. 1.
Luke 16.

31.

(a) Cultura Animæ Medicina Animi, Dux Vitæ : maximum munus homini à Diis datum. Cic. Tusc. 3. 1.

are not improved by this, 'tis not likely that any other Method would sanctifie and save them. What (a) *Simplicius* says of the Discourses of *Epiſtetus*, may juſtly be ſaid of the Goſpel, *That he that is incorrigible under ſo powerful a Remedy, is not likely to be wrought on by any thing leſs than the Torments of the Damned.* The moſt perfect Philoſophy loſes all its Excellency, if compared with the Precepts and Discoveries of the Divine Word; the moſt admired Sentences of the moſt renowned Philoſophers, if compared with the Doctrines of the *Bible*, are but as (b) ſo many artificial Fruits of Wax, which only pleaſe the Sight; or as Rings of Steel joined together by the attractive Power of a Loadſtone, that make a Chain fair to the Eye, but of little ſtrength and uſe. The Goſpel is
 2 Cor. 3. 8. the principal ſaving Meen, the *Miniftration of the Spirit*, which has been often bleſſ'd by God
 Pſal. 138. for the good of Souls, and which he *magnifies above all things*, ſo that if any periſh under it, 'tis not for want of *Aptitude* in the Meen, but of a *right Temper* in the Subject, who *reſiſts the Light, becauſe his Deeds are evil*: The Seed of the Word is good, the Hand of the Sower is very kind; but the Ground is bad, when the ſown Seed brings forth nothing but Briars and Thorns, the proper Fuel for Eternal Fire.

2. It is not reaſonable to ſuppoſe that any Decree of God, is the proper immediate Cauſe of the words being *the ſavour of Death to any*.

(a) *Simpl. Pref. ad Epiſtetum.*

(b) *Dr. Bates.*

A Decree is an *Immanent Act*, which as *such* cannot have an external Causal Influence, and must necessarily be supposed to be agreeable to the Divine Wisdom and Goodness, and the *due Regard* of God to his Rectoral Government, which always considers the Nature of his Subjects, and so must be consistent with his *standing Revelation*, by which we are fully assured that the Blessed God *delights not in the death of Sinners*, Ezek. 33. and therefore we may depend on it as a most ^{11.} certain Truth, That there can be no *Necessity* arising from the *secret Will* of God, but what must fully agree with the *Sincerity* of his *declared Will*: Not to allow this, is a sort of Blasphemy, by supposing the most Benign Being, in some sense, to be a Secret Deceiver, and Open Destroyer. 'Tis said indeed of *Christ*, that he is *set for the falling of many*; Luke 2. but what can this signify more, than God's ^{34.} permitting impenitent Sinners to abuse the Grace of his Gospel, in a way agreeable to their own malignant Temper, and then justly to with-hold further Influences of Grace, which they *can't deserve*, and he is no way *obliged* to give, and thereby they become their own Destroyers. Nothing is more certain, than that the Blessed God is not the *Author of Sin*, notwithstanding the extravagant Opinion of some (a) Hereticks, who thereby blasphemed the holy Name of God; and the dark and doubtful Notions of some of the (b) Heathen Philosophers; and therefore he

(a) Irenæus, l. 4. c. 47.

(b) Democritus, Heraclitus, Empedocles, Diog. Laert.

can't be supposed to be the *Immediate Cause* of the Death of any who have not abused Mercy, and thereby forfeited Life; so that the Decree of God is not the Cause of Death, if not the Cause of Sin. There are some Passages in Scripture, I confess, that at first view may encline some to think otherwise: It was a Sin in *David* to Number the People; and yet 'tis said that *God moved David to number the People*, tho' God, in that very Place, tells us that *his Anger was kindled against Israel* upon that Account; the Guilt was so great, that it occasion'd the Death of Seventy thousand Persons; so that we may be sure that God did not *move* to a thing that was so dreadful in its Consequence: It should therefore be render'd, according to the *Original*, that *David was moved* to say, Go, number the People; he was moved by *Satan*; for so are we assured in another Place, that the Devil moved *David* to do it. The Great God is represented as Punishing *David* for his *Murder* and *Adultery*, as if he himself was concerned in Sin, *I will take thy Wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy Neighbour, and he shall lie with thy Wives in the sight of the Sun*; but the Verb in the *Original* (a) signifies only the *Permission* of it, and the word *Evil* signifies *Affliction*; and by this Alteration, there is no occasion of Scoffing given to *Atheists* and *Libertines*. In the same sense must another Scripture be explained, wherein God speaks to the *Evil Spirit*, *Go forth*:

(a) Signifies to permit, as Gen. 20. 6. Numb. 20. 21. Judg. 1. 24.

Now therefore behold, the Lord has put a lying *Ver. 23.*
spirit in the mouth of all these thy Prophets.
 He that had expressly declared to cut off all
 Lyars, and had also commanded that all False-
 Prophets should be put to Death, could not pos-
 sibly favour either: 'Tis therefore well ob-
 served by (a) Criticks, that the *Imperative* often
 denotes only a bare *Permission*, as a Father pro-
 voked by wicked Children may say, *Go on,*
ruin your selves, which imports a simple Per-
 mission, and not a real Inclination: And thus
 may we understand those Words of the Pro-
 phet, *Oh Lord, why hast thou made us to err from* *Isa. 63. 17.*
thy ways? According to the Scope of the Chap-
 ter, the Stile of the Hebrew Tongue, and the
 Opinion of the most learned Interpreters, we
 may read the Words, *Why hast thou suffered us to*
err from thy ways? 'Tis fit here to be con-
 sidered, that the Great God, by any secret
 Decree or Influence, can't be supposed either
 to tempt to Sin, or force to Sin: He cannot force
 to Sin; if he did, it could not be Sin, neither
 could he punish Sin: It could not be Sin; (b) for
 Sin, as 'tis a Violation of a Law, must be a
 Contradiction to the Will of God; if it was
 the Will of God that I should sin, 'tis plain to
Demonstration that thereby I could not contra-
 dict his Will, but my Sin must be an active
 or passive Obedience; neither can it be sup-
 posed that God could punish Sin, for Punish-
 ment doth necessarily suppose a Fault, and a

(a) As Glassius. Compare 2 Sam. 15. 23. Gal. 4. 27.
 Eph. 4. 26.

(b) A. B. Tillotson on Jam. 1. 13.

Fault supposes some liberty of Action: I can't therefore be punisht for what I can't help by my own Power, or the Power of another, and I can't help what I am forced to do. There is nothing in the *Nature* of God, that can incline a considering Person to suspect, that he should force to Sin, and so to Sorrow by any *secret Decree*; when Sin is a contrariety to the Divine Perfections, the thing which *his Soul hates*; and there cannot be any *external Motive* to incline and dispose God to it, for with him there can be no *hope of gaining* or *fear of losing*; when he is an infinite Being, *full of himself*, to whom nothing can be added, and *secure of himself*, from whom nothing can be removed. As it cannot be supposed that the Deity by any secret Decree and Influence should force to sin, neither can it be supposed that he should any way tempt to sin: Let no Man say when he is tempted, *I am tempted of God*, for God cannot be tempted with Evil, neither tempteth he any Man; but every Man is tempted when he is drawn aside of his own Lusts, and enticed. The blessed God tries the graces of the Good, but do's not tempt the corruptions of the Wicked: he do's not tempt by *perswading* them to sin, for he plainly and openly declares, that *he that sinneth against God, wrongeth his own Soul*: neither doth he put them in *such Circumstances*, as that they cannot possibly avoid Sin, for he hath no end worthy of himself to answer by it. This is the work of the Devil, who can answer an end suitable to the Pride, Envy, and Malignity of his Nature; but if the Great God can't do Evil for *Evil sake*, we may be sure he can't by any Decree force to sin, or any

Influ-

James 1.
13, 14.

Prov. 8.
36.

Influence *tempt* to sin ; and therefore must not be apprehended by any to be the *immediate efficient cause* of their Ruin and Misery. How fond soever some Persons may be of a *Decree of Reprobation*, with a due regard to their Learning and Piety, I desire to be excused if I differ from them, if they mean by it, either that God hath decreed without *respect* to the *Sins of Men*, their absolute Ruin and Misery, or that he hath decreed that they shall *inevitably sin and perish*. This Notion I think is no part of the Doctrine of holy Scripture, which is the only Rule of Faith ; and if others have apprehended that they could reconcile it with the *Essential Goodness* of God, my Eyes are not yet open to see it. What must we understand by the Goodness of God, but a propension of the Divine Nature, to communicate Being and Happiness to his Creatures ? And what can be more opposite to such a *Disposition*, than an absolute Resolution or Decree to make them miserable ? A Good God is infinitely better than the best of Men ; and yet none can think that Person good and kind, who shall *absolutely resolve* to disinherit and destroy his own Children, without the Foresight and Consideration of any Fault to be committed by them. It must be own'd that there is a *Sovereignty in God*, that is not to be measured by common Rules of Goodness, as apprehended by us ; but we dare not attribute any such *Sovereignty*, as is *contrary to*, or *inconsistent* with this Goodness ; (a) for if the Sovereignty of

(a) A. B. Tillotson.

God may break in at pleasure upon his other Attributes, it can signifie little or nothing to say, that God is either *Good, Just, or Wise*. The permitting or punishing Sin according to the *foreknowledge of God*, seems every way consistent with *all the Divine Perfections*, so that we may safely say, that the Great God has not *absolutely decreed* to bring all Men infallibly to Salvation ; but in his own infinite Knowledge, *foresees* the sins and wickedness of Men, and hath from all Eternity *determined* in himself, what in his Word he hath plainly *declared*, that he will punish *Impenitent Sinners* with everlasting Destruction. Thus he may foresee, permit, and then punish Sin without any impeachment of his Goodness. If it be said by any, that the Fore-knowledge of God is *infallible*, and that thereby the event is made *necessary*, I need only say that the bare Fore-knowledge of things *future*, hath no more influence upon them to make them *to be*, than the sight and knowledge of things *present*, hath upon them to make them *to be present*. I may see the Sun is risen, and not be the cause of *its rising* ; and the Divine Understanding can see all Events in a way *suitable to his own Nature*, and the *Nature of his Creatures*, without acting *against* his own Holiness and Goodness, or *perverting and opposing* the Nature and Actions of any of his Creatures. Such a Knowledge is *necessary to the Deity*, without which he can't be *Omniscient*, and without Omniscience, we can't form a true notion of God ; and as it is necessary to the Deity, it can't but be *consistent* with the nature of free Agents ; so that the wilful Obstinacy and Impenitency of Sinners, seems

seems to be as *culpable*, and the Goodness of God as much to be *acknowledged*, as if God did not foresee the abuse of it, because his *fore-sight* of what they *would do*, laid no necessity upon them *to do* what they did. That God doth decree to give saving Grace to any, is an Act of *Transcendent Goodness* ; but we need not say, that he doth *decree not to give his Grace to others* ; for why should a Nullity be the Object of a Decree ? 'Tis more proper I think to say, *he doth not decree to do it*, which makes a *vast difference*, and prevents any possible Reflexion on the Divine Perfections. We can only judge of the *intention* of a Decree by its *Execution* ; and we find that the Great God doth only destroy in Time *for Sin* , and therefore we may safely conclude he did not decree from Eternity the Destruction of any, but with regard to their *Sin* : 'Tis fit to take notice here, that the word (a) *Reprobate* in Scripture, Rom. 1. do's not relate to any Decree of God, but denotes 21, 28. the *unworthiness* of Man by his own Corruption, as not fit to be owned and approved of God. 2 Tim. 3. 8. The Earth is said to be *Reprobate*, when after 1 Cor. 13. 5. fruitful Showers, it brings forth nothing but Briers and Thorns : Silver is said to be *Repro-* Heb. 6. 8. Prov. 25. 4. *bate*, when it has not a right Stamp, and so is rejected : And so the Apostle Paul kept his 1 Cor. 9. Body under, that he might *not be a Cast-away*, 27.

(a) Ἀδόκιμοι, They that liked not to retain God in their Hearts, were given up to a Reprobate Mind, (εἰς νέμ ἀδόκιμον.) They who resisted the Truth, are said to be Reprobates concerning the Faith (ἀδόκιμοι πρὸς τὴν πίστιν) they that are Disobedient, are said to be to every good Work Reprobate, void of Judgment to discern, and of Affection to approve.

(ἀδόκιμοι)

(ἀνυποσταντός) a Reprobate, one disown'd of God. There are *some Scriptures* that do indeed *seem* to refer to the Decree of God; but if we consider the *Original Language* the *Context*, and compare them with other passages of Scripture, they will *admit*, if not require, a very different Interpretation: We read, that God

Prov. 16. 4. *hath made all things for himself, and even the Wicked for the day of Evil*; but it may more properly be render'd, the *wicked agree, or are fitted for the day of Evil*; by their Sin are fitted for Punishment. 'Tis said of the Sons of *Eli*,

1 Sam. 2. 25. *that they harkened not to the voice of their Father, because the Lord would slay them.* (a) The Hebrew Conjunction signifies here, and in other Places, *because, or wherefore, or tho'*; and this Remark gives the words a meaning worthy of God, and represents him punishing the Children of *Eli*, *because* they slighted their Fathers Counsel. In the Prophet *Jeremiah*,

Jer. 7. 10. *we read, We have been delivered to do all these Abominations*; but 'tis easy to say it may be translated, *we have been delivered, tho' we have done all these Abominations*: it is said, *that many*

1 Pet. 2. 8. *did stumble at the Word being Disobedient, whereunto also they were appointed*; it can't be supposed without Blasphemy, that a holy God should appoint Persons to *Disobedience*, to stumble at his Word; no, the Apostle manifestly speaks of *Unbelievers*, and says, that they stumble at the word *which was offer'd them*, or upon which they were set; 'tis a plain allusion to Builders, who stumble against the Materials that are

(a) Buxtorf Lex.

appointed them to build with; so that we can easily conclude, that the *Word was appointed* at which they did stumble, and were disobedient, and not that *they were appointed to be disobedient*: We read, (a) that *Christ was delivered by the determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God*; perhaps the (b) Participle do's not so much denote the Action of Judas, or the Crime of the Jews, in betraying our Saviour, and delivering him to Pontius Pilate, as the Gift and Present which God made of his Son to the Jews, he was deliver'd to them according to the *determinate Counsel of God*; but not to insist on that, 'tis certain that, in Scripture that is said to be done according to the *determinate Counsel of God*, which is done according to the declaration of his Word: The Son of Man goeth as it is written of him, which is expressed (c) as it is determined by God concerning him: It was requisite for the great God to suffer Christ to fall into the hands of wicked Men, for they could have no power over him, unless it was thus given them from above; and this unrestrained permission is all that can be signified, I think, by God's delivering Christ up into their Hands; and this lays no necessity on the Persons concern'd, so as to excuse the guilt of what they do, or any way concern the Deity in the Crime committed by them: God foresees things in their Causes, but by foreseeing them, he do's not cause them so to be.

(a) *Εκδοτος.

(b) Nov. Translat.

(c) Κατὰ τὸ ᾤκισμένον.

3. That the Gospel is the *Savour of Death*, is not principally owing to any *Spiritual Judgments*, that the Great God do's inflict on the Souls of Men. 'Tis most certain that the blessed God do's oftentimes punish Sinners with *Spiritual Judgments*, tho' but few are apprehensive of them: Some according to Scripture Phrase, are given up by God to *blindness of Eye, hardness of Heart*, to their own *Lusts*, and a *reprobate Mind*; and thereby the great Enemy of immortal Souls, *leads them captive at his will*; it is said that God sends amongst some *strong Delusions*, but it can't be suppos'd that he do's *inspire* into them any Evil, that he do's *incline or excite them to Sin*, or any way *force and necessitate* them to Evil, but only as *punishment for Sin*, he permits Satan to delude them: When he *gives Sinners up to their Lusts*, it is by leaving them destitute of some providential Dispensations, or internal Influences which might restrain them, had they not justly forfeited so great a Blessing; and then by permitting Satan to deceive and ensnare them. To give up, is to *permit Persons to be given up*, so the (a) Original Word is generally used in Scripture. The Great God is said to *harden the Hearts of Sinners*, which signifies no more, than his permitting Sinners by the influence of Satan to harden themselves, which they fatally do, partly by *resisting and opposing* those outward Means, and inward Influences that are most apt to soften them, and keep their

(a) Παρέδωκεν εἰς ἀδίκην ἑαυτὸν, so used a hundred times in the Old Testament, — Grotius.

Consciences tender ; and by indulging themselves in those wilful Sins, (a) that do gradually harden and stupify them. This is a most dreadful Judgment, but yet is not the immediate principal Cause of the Death of Souls ; because the blessed God doth inflict such Judgments as a punishment for past Sins, and in so doing he leaves Sinners to their own choice ; such Judgments are inflicted, as a just Judgment for past Sins : We are told that God hardened the heart of Pharaoh, which was not by any internal stupifying Influence, but principally by changing the Scene of external Providence, removing those Afflictions which had an aptitude to awaken and soften him, and that after Pharaoh had hardened himself by sinning against God. All which God did with respect to Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and with respect to the Jews in the Apostles Time, was much more apt to soften, than to harden their Hearts : 'Tis very Remarkable, that it was always after the seeing of Moses Miracles, and after the ceasing of the Plagues, that the Scripture says, that Pharaoh hardened his Heart, or that God hardened it : And 'tis aptly observed by Learned Interpreters, (b) that the Verbs which Moses uses in those places signify a simple Permission, of which there are many unquestionable Examples ; and so God hardens whom he will for Sin, and by Sin, permitting them to continue hard by wilful Sin ;

(a) Grotius, &c. The Verbs denote a bare Permission, as in Gen. 24. 17. Exod. 1. 17. Deut. 20. 16. 1 Sam. 27. 11. compared in the N. Translat. p. 178.

(b) Quò quis pejùs se habet, minùs sentit. Sen. Epist. 53.

in these Judgments there is a direct regard to
 past Sin. God permitted Satan to enter into
 Joh. 13. 27. the Heart of Judas; but he had taken *council*
before to betray Christ, and to fill the Heart of
 Acts 5. 3. Ananias, that he *lied to the Holy Ghost*, but he
 was before that guilty of *Covetousness* : And
 thus may God justly punish any Sinners for
 their aggravated Offences. If I refuse the re-
 newed offers of Grace, if I often resist the
 Spirit of Light, Love, and Power, no wonder
 if God hides his Face, suspends his vital In-
 fluences, and permits the *God of this World to*
 2 Cor. 4. 4. *blind my Eyes*, so that the *light of the glorious*
Gospel shall not shine in upon me ; the blessed God
 grants us a bright day of Grace, before the
 shadows of a Spiritual Evening stretch forth
 themselves on us : He *waits long to be gracious*
 to us, before he pronounces a Spiritual Curse
 on us ; he looks *long* for Fruit, before he
 Mat. 3. 10. lays the *Ax to the Root of the Tree* to cut it
 down, as a Cumber-ground, as one that brings
 forth *no Fruit*, and fills up the *room* of one that
 might : Certain it is, O Soul ! that thy merci-
 ful Lord appoints the most apt means to fos-
 ten, and save thee ; he exhorts thee to the con-
 stant use of them, he assists thee by his Spi-
 rit, for, and in the use of them ; he do's in-
 courage thee with the hope of Success, and
 he stays to see the issue of all before he'll leave
 thee, and seal thee up for Ruin. So is it re-
 presented by the Prophet, *Because I have*
 Ezek. 27. 13. *purged you, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt*
not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I
have caused my fury to rest on thee. As God
 do's inflict such spiritual Judgments for *past*
Sins, of which as has been shewn, he cannot
 be

be the cause by open Force, or secret Fraud ;
 so when he do's thus punish, he gives *Sinners*
their own choice, so that they can have no rea-
 son to complain of him, as the Author of
 their Death and Ruin : 'Tis said as has
 been observ'd, he gives them up to their *own*
hearts Lusts, Lusts that they chuse and cherish
 with their Hearts ; this aggravates their fault
 and folly, when God permits them to *take*
their own Way, to act according to their *own*
Hearts desire, and to *walk in the light of their own*
Eyes : he says, let him that *is filthy, be filthy still* ; Rev. 22.
 words big with Vengeance, dreadful enough 11.
 to make a Sinner tremble every Moment.
 Filth is his *choice*, let it be his *Curse*. The *Jews*
 closed their Eyes, and then God sent a Spirit Matth. 13.
 of Slumber ; some in former days did not 15.
 hearken to the Voice of God, and of those he
 said, *Israel would have none of me, so that I gave* Pf. 81. 11.
them that they walkt in their own Counsels : what
 Curse can be more dreadful, than to be our
 own Counsellors, when thereby we are our
 own Destroyers ? Thus Sinners do eat the
 fruit of their own Ways, and are filled with their Prov. 1 31.
 own Devices ; they reap the Fruit they sow, and
 are filled with what they did devise, they are
 Self-destroyers : How dreadful is such a Self-
 murder, that issues in a Spiritual and Eternal
 Death ? Think, oh Sinner, and tremble lest it
 should be thy case this Moment : Thou canst
 not destroy thy self by a *deliberate Choice*, for no Eph. 5. 29.
Man hateth his own Flesh ; but thou dost if thou
 art an impenitent Sinner, take *that course* that
 has a moral and judicial tendency to thy
 Ruin ; for thou dost oppose the Blessed Spirit
 of Grace, whose Influences are *saving*, and

thou dost *concur with* Satan, whose designs are *damning* ; thou dost *unfit thy self* for Heaven, by Brutality or Devilism, the Sins of the Flesh and Spirit, as by the one we resemble Brutes, and by the other Devils. If such a Soul was admitted into Heaven, there must be an everlasting Silence and Distance, or an everlasting War and Confusion : There can be no blissful Vision, and satisfying Fruition, where there is no Likeness and Agreement. Thou dost *not only*, O Soul, *unfit thy self* for Heaven, but by Sin thou dost *justly expose* thy self to the execution of the Divine Threatnings, as to spiritual and eternal Death : The execution of these might have *been avoided*, or else they had *never been declared* ; but if not prevented they must be *endured*, and thus Sinners destroy themselves.

C H A P. IV.

*The several Occasions of the Words being
the Saviour of Death considered.*

- IV. **M**Any Persons, thro' the corruption of their Nature, take an occasion from several Things to despise the Word, whereby in the Issue it proves to them the *Savour of Death unto Death* : It is the dismal Character of some Persons, that they *make light of the Gospel of Christ*, not considering its great Propriety, and vast Importance ; with some 'tis but a *light Thing*, it weighs in their Scales little more

more than a Shadow, tho' its concern and design is nothing less than *Eternal Salvation*; so strangely are some Souls deluded by Satan, and infatuated by the power of Corruption that matters of the *last Moment*, are the *least* in their Thought, they take occasion from many little things, to despise and neglect the Word, tho' their diseased Souls are perishing, and the Word of God is the only appointed Medicine apt and sufficient for their Recovery; they are not sensible of their Distemper, and so do not value the Remedy.—Some Persons take occasion from one thing, and some from another, to make light of the Word; but I think most *pretended* or *real* Occasions, may be reduced to four Heads, which I shall a little consider: Some take occasion from the *Gospel it self*, some from the *Ministers of the Gospel*, some *from the Professors* of it, and others from the *discouraging Circumstances* of some Persons in this present State. Tho Persons take occasion to make light of the Gospel on such accounts as these, I'll briefly shew, that this do's not excuse, much less justify their contempt of it.

I. Some take occasion from the *Gospel it self*, to despise it to their own ruin, whereby it becomes to them the *Savour of Death*. Under this Head it may be proper to consider a few Things: As

1. Some take occasion from the Sublimity of *Gospel Doctrines*, as they are opposite to the Pride of Carnal Reason. Some are so foolish and proud, as not to believe what they cannot comprehend, tho' the matter be plainly

revealed: *Reason* to them is the *Standard of Truth*, as *Sense* is of *good*; and by vain Reasonings, they *exalt themselves against the Knowledge of God*. From such daring *Arrogance*, some of the greatest Pretenders of Reason have appeared, as *Celsus*, *Porphyry*, *Julian*: This was the cause of the cry of the *Pharisees*, *are we blind also?* This was the great Criminal Reason, that the Doctrines of our Saviour's Divinity, Incarnation, Crucifixion and Resurrection, were to the *Jews* a *Stumbling-block*, and to the *Greeks* *foolishness*. But whatever occasion some may take from the Mysteries of the Gospel to despise it, nothing can appear more reasonable to an unprejudiced considering Mind, than the giving credit to a Doctrine that *bears the Signature of Heaven*, as declared by the *Wisdom*, and confirmed by the *Power of God*. There is nothing in the Doctrines of the Gospel *contrary to Reason*, as has been evinced by (a) *Learned Persons*: The *Light of Reason* and *Revelation*, are both *the Off-spring* of the the Father of Lights, and so can't be contrary to each other; as the blessed God can't contradict himself, one Light of his can't extinguish another. The Doctrines of Christianity are indeed, many of them, *far above the reach* of the most improved Reason; (b) but 'tis highly reasonable we should believe them,

(a) *Mr. Boyle*, *things above Reason*, and *contrary*: *Mr. Norris*, &c. *A. B. Tillotson*, *Whitby*.

(b) *The Modern Tracts against the Deists*, as well as the *Ancient Apologists*, have abundantly cleared the Point.

because

because recommended by him who has an *indisputable Right* to our *Faith*. There is as much reason for our honouring God with our *Understandings*, by submitting our *Reason* to his *Revelation*, as for our honouring him with our *Wills* or *Choice*, submitting our *Wills* to the *Will* of God ; without this there can be *no Religion*. It is as great a sign of inexcusable *Pride*, to contradict the *Word* of God, as it is of inexcusable *Peevishness* to resist the *Will* of God. The Great God can no more deceive us, than he can be deceived by us ; the *Deceiver*, and the *Deceived* are both his, but Job. 12. he is neither. If therefore we can't compre- 16. hend what is revealed, we have reason to credit it, because we can't be deceived ; if we are sure 'tis the *Word* of God, the *Authority* of God do's justly challenge our *Faith* and *Submission* : We dare not but believe what the *Mouth* of the *Lord* has spoken ; not to credit God, is to affront, yea, to disown him ; he that do's not give him his *Faith*, gives him the *Lie*, and the *God* of *Truth* will certainly avenge himself on him : Besides, the *mysterious Doctrines* of the *Gospel* are *in themselves* a strong *Argument* for our *Credit* and *Admiration*, as they most evidently represent to us a transcendent excellency in a *Gospel Revelation*, they are to an observing *Eye* an incontestable *Proof*, that it can be no *Creaturely thing*, its *Original* must be *Divine* ; for who could *invent* what none can *understand* ? What is necessary to *Salvation*, is so *plainly* revealed, that it is scarce possible for a thinking, praying *Person* to mistake, and miscarry : We need not therefore complain,

2 Pet. 3.
16.

plain, if there be some *things hard to be understood*, when it can't but be allowed as most proper for the Great God, the King of Kings, to have his *Arcana Imperii*, hidden Treasures of Truth, to keep up his own Honour, and make us sensible of our own Ignorance. Surely it becomes so infinite a Majesty to discover himself by *degrees*, and maintain an awful Distance between himself, and the wisest of his Creatures: Nothing is more apt to promote Humility, than the making a Person fully sensible of his Ignorance. This is the way the Great God takes to keep an aspiring Creature *humble*, and 'tis a Method most worthy of himself, for hereby our *Ignorance* in some Sense, as well as our *Knowledge*, is an Argument for our *Reverence*: More is discovered to us under a Gospel Dispensation, than was under the legal Institutions; we should be therefore thankful that we *know so much*, and not thro' Pride quarrel with the Deity that we do not know more. 'Tis fit that he should *bide the face of his Throne*, veil his Councils, and only discover to us what is *suitable* to our present State of Tryal, reserving to himself Treasures of Knowledge, which will be the blissful entertainment of Heaven; how could our Understandings be tryed if we knew *All*, or our Wills, if we received *All*! A Degree of Ignorance is most suitable to a state of Tryal, that we may be excited to adore him, whom we cannot comprehend. 'Tis as fit that in this World we should only know in part; as in the other World 'tis thought fit for us to *know, as we are known*; we are here to *walk by Faith, not by Sight*; but if we had
a full

Heb. 2. 4.

2 Cor. 5. 7.

a full discovery of all Truth, our Faith would be turned into Vision ; as if we had a full possession of all Good, our Love and Hope would be turned into Fruition. We are to be tryed in the Valley, before we shall be allowed to ascend up to the Mount of Vision, and therefore some matters must remain dark and doubtful, that we may glorifie the God of Truth by our *dependance* on his *Veracity*, and submission to his *Authority* : if any think it reasonable not to believe as true, what they can't comprehend, they may soon excuse themselves from giving credit to *any thing*, and so deceive themselves by a continual Scepticism. If we believe in a *proper Sense*, it must be on the *Authority of the Person* that declares it, and not on the *evidence* of the thing *declared* ; for if the assent of the Mind is grounded on the evidence of the thing, it is *not Faith*, but *Reason* ; and therefore if I believe nothing but what I can comprehend, I don't in a *strict Sense* believe at all. We are so far from having a comprehensive Knowledge of any one of the Divine Perfections, that we have not a perfect knowledge of the least particle of Matter, degree of Motion, or moment of Duration, and yet we think fit to believe what is generally agreed concerning them. Is there a greater Mystery in the possibility of *Three being One* (in some undeclared Sense) than in the Omnipresence of the Godhead, requiring absolute Unity and Identity in the most distant Times and Places ? I am perswaded that those Persons that are so apt to *dispute* about the *Mysteries* of the Gospel, are not the greatest Friends to the purity of the Gospel;

pel; their want of Faith is not so much owing to the want of *External Evidence*, as *Internal Affection*; *They love darkness rather than light, as their Deeds are Evil*. An irreligious Practice is the occasion of an Infidel Principle, many break the Table of the Commandments, and then easily make void their Creed. If Persons would *hold the mystery of Faith, it must be in a pure Conscience*; but some do oftentimes put away a good Conscience, and so make shipwreck of their Faith: They don't *do the Will of God*, and no wonder then if they don't know *whether the Doctrine be of God or no*. It becomes such Persons seriously to consider what a *desperate hazard* they run, by opposing their *uncertain Reason*, to a *sure Revelation*; what they apprehend as unintelligible, and not fit to be credited, is *plainly revealed*, and has been the common Object of the Faith of the Church of God for 1700 Years, received as Gospel Truths by Persons of the *greatest Learning and Wisdom*, as well as *Piety and Humility*, and have prevailed as matters of the greatest concern, notwithstanding the opposition of Earth and Hell. If they should believe them, they can be *no losers*, as to this or another World; and if they *should not believe them*, they may *for ever destroy themselves* for want of due Faith; if the matters in debate should *appear false*, they are but *deceived*, and have reason to think that God will pardon their Mistake, when they have been serious and diligent in informing their Minds for his Glory; but if they should be found to *be true*, how can they hope to escape *Damnation*, when to such it is so often threatned in the Gospel: It must be owned that

John 3.
19.

I Tim. 3.
9.

I Tim. 1.
19.

John 7.
17.

that we can't believe what and when we will ; but it becomes us so to live, so to pray, and so to free our selves from Prejudices, as that we may be apt to attend to outward Evidence, and ready to receive those enlightning Influences of the Divine Spirit, which are necessary to a *saving Faith* ; for no Man *calleth* 1 Cor. 12. *Jesu Lord, but by the Holy Ghost* : while we are fearful on one side, let us do all we can that we are not unbelieving on the other ; that we may not be number'd either amongst those Revel. 21. *fearful or unbelieving*, who are to be cast into the Lake of Fire. 8.

2. Some do take occasion from the *Spirituality of the Gospel* to neglect it, whereby the Word becomes the *Savour of Death* : The Spirituality of the Word of God is contrary to the canality of Man's Heart, and the general licentiousness of his Life ; and this is a common occasion of Offence. The Gospel 2 Cor. 7. 1. do's more strictly oblige us to *purify our selves* Titus 2. *from all filthiness, both of Flesh and Spirit, to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and live soberly, righteously and godly in this World ; and therefore may do hate the Light, because their Deeds* Joh. 3. 19. *are Evil, and have pleasure in Unrighteousness* : But yet nothing is more becoming a holy God, than to require holiness from his Creatures, that thereby they may be like him, and fit to be for ever with him, which can never be without a *clean and pure Heart*, which doth consist in *Sincerity and Spirituality* : Hypocrisy is spiritual Impurity ; where there is Guile there must be Guilt, and Carnality both as to external Acts, and internal Frames, is excluded by a *can Spirit*, and then a Heavenly temper

per takes place. When a Soul is thus free from Hypocrisy and Sensuality, and not only made sincere, but serious, spiritual and heavenly, then is it *clean*: And this is the *peculiar Charge and Claim* of a Gospel Dispensation, as it is the Ministration of the Spirit; it is one of the most distinguishing Perfections of the Christian Institution, that it requires inward rectitude of Spirit. The Heathen Morality went little further than the *Regulation* of the outward Behaviour, though some of the Philosophers, (a) as *Pythagoras*, and *Plato* talk much of the Purgations, and Purifications of the Soul. The Jewish Religion was much more perfect, than the Gentile Morality, there being in the Moral Law one *special Precept* which concerns Purity of Heart; but yet tho' there was a Prohibition of *inward Concupiscence*, there was no penal Sanction annexed to it. Idolatry, Murder, Perjury, Adultery, and Theft were punished, but not *Concupiscence*; and 'tis certain that many among the *Jews* contented themselves with an external conformity to the Law, without a due regard to inward Purity, as appears from our Saviour's sharp Reprehensions of the *Pharisees*. Upon that account we may say with an ingenious Person, (b) the Law did not rigidly *exact* purity of Heart, tho' it did *plainly command* it: Under the Jewish Dispensation there was great Indulgence afforded to the Annual Inclinations, and their very Religion was en-

(a) Vid. Plotinus.

(b) Mr. Norris.

deared to them by Temporal Blessings, to prevent their Idolatry ; it being (a) a received Notion among the Idolatrous Nations, that the Worship of the false Gods did procure them fruitful Seasons. Under a Gospel we are to *purifie our selves, even as God is Pure* ; and this is one great reason why we have not the *particular measures* of what is lawful, laid down in the New Testament, because we are not to be holy as to a *particular Degree*, without advancing higher, but we are to strive after Perfection, and therefore must avoid *all appearance of Evil*. We are not merely *not to do* what is unlawful, but we are not to do what is *otherwise lawful*, if it doth prevent the increase of inward Purity ; if we were to be holy to such a *Degree*, it had been necessary to lay down *particular Rules and Measures* for our Actions ; but now general ones are *sufficient*, when tho' we have a *Christian liberty*, we must not use it as an occasion for the *Flesh* ; but so allow or deny our selves, as becomes *Persons perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord*. This Spirituality of the Gospel for a time prevented its progress among Persons swallowed up in Sense ; the World had been long used to Temples, adorned with Superstitious Relicks, and to (b) costly Feasts, whereby when they honoured God, they indulged themselves, they sacrificed to their *own Flesh*, while they pretended to worship a *pure Spirit*. There was in the common Devotion of Persons, such a variety of Images and Altars, such a *pompous Pageantry*,

(a) Spencer de Legibus Hebræorum, &c.

(b) The Bashanalia, *referr'd to by St. Paul's Epistles*.

as charmed the Senses, and render'd the Spiritual Worship of our Saviour awkward and unseemly ; but what ever Offence a Carnal Mind may take at the simplicity and purity of Gospel Worship, 'tis most fit that our Hearts should be a Temple, and all the Powers of our Souls a Sacrifice to God : 'Tis fit indeed for a *Spiritual Being* to be worshipt in *Spirit and Truth*, that the *Heart* should be *required*, without the consent of which all the splendid Performances of outward Devotion, are but an Offence to him.

3. Some do take occasion from the *Precepts* of the Gospel, as impossible, or at least very difficult to be observed, to despise the Word, whereby it becomes to them the *Savour of Death*. The Commands of the Gospel are contrary to the sloth of corrupt Nature ; but nothing can be more reasonable than a ready entire Obedience to them ; for they are *all Holy, Just, and Good*. It cannot be supposed that the God of all Grace doth require any thing *simply impossible*, that seems contrary to the Divine Perfections, and inconsistent with a State of Tryal ; our Obedience can never be try'd by a Law that can never be obeyed ; an Impossibility can't be the matter of a Divine Command, in order to our Tryal and Salvation ; but yet it must be allowed, that we may *very justly be commanded*, what we meerly of our selves can't fully perform. We are assured in Scripture, that an Apostate Creature is Impotent,

2 Cor. 3. 5. he can't of *himself think one good Thought*, and the enabling influence of the Spirit of Christ, is necessary to Gospel Obedience ; for with-

Joh. 15. 5. out him, 'tis said *we can do nothing* : but yet tho'

tho' by our Apostacy we are disabled, yet we *were once able* to obey the Commands of God, and our inability is owing to our selves: we were once strong with *Sampson*, though now our Locks are shaven; we were made *upright*, but we *Eccles. 7. 29.* sought out to our selves many Inventions, where- by we disabled and destroy'd our selves: The folly and fault of our First Parents, is the just cause of our sinful Weakness, which tho' it has lessened our Power, doth not lessen our Obligation: The Great God has the same right to Command, tho' we have not *sufficient strength* to Perform, tho' we break the Pillar of our own Strength, we cannot break his Scepter of Righteousness; 'tis fit for him to continue the force of the Command, to humble our growing Pride, and make us sensible of our criminal Insufficiency; and so glorifie his own Grace, by making us apprehensive of the necessity of his Assistance, who works all *his Works in us, and for us*; by such Commands *Isa. 26. 12.* he doth not injure us, by deluding us, upbraiding us, or forcing us to Despair; for tho' he doth require what we of our selves can't perform, yet he requires nothing but *what he is willing to make us able to perform*, for we are not *under the Law*, but *under Grace*: The Law Commands, but doth not Assist; but the Grace of God is ready to be *sufficient for us*, that is able to do more abundantly for us, than we can ask or think, and we can do all things thro' Christ that *strengthens us*; not that it is to be expected that Christ should do all for us, and we under his influence do nothing; we are to *work out our own Salvation, because God work-* *Phil. 2. 12, 13.* *eth in us to will, and to do of his good pleasure*: his

working is a great Argument against our Sloth ; if he works, 'tis fit for us to work, for 'tis *our own Salvation* ; and if he works 'tis *at Pleasure*, and therefore we should concur with him, lest we provoke him to leave us. 'Tis *absurd* to think that our Impotency is like that of a Stone, which doth not want any power that is *due to its Nature*, and therefore is no ways *Criminal* ; our Inability is *wilful*, and the influence of the Spirit has a constant tendency to remove it, whereby under the Great Worker, we may work out *our Salvation with Fear and Trembling* ; and therefore we are inexcusable if we don't pray for, and concur with the Spirit of Christ , when by improving what we receive, we may have further sufficient Assistance for our compleat Salvation : Tho' there may not be a *necessary connexion*, as indeed there is not in Nature, between Sowing and Reaping, Industry and Riches ; yet there is so *encouraging an one* between our Improvement and renewed Assistance, that if we ask the Spirit, we have the highest Encouragement to hope we shall receive it ; *for to him that bath shall be given*. It can't easily be supposed that God will be more backward to encourage in Grace, than in Nature, when his Spirit is promised as *good*, and all other things only *if for our good*. After all Disputes in this matter, and Excuses of ignorant and slothful Sinners, (a) lazy Persons have no reason to

Mat. 25.
92.

(a) Vigilando, agendo, consulendo, prosperè omnia cedant ubi socordia te, atq; Ignavia tradideris, nequicquam Deos implores, Irati, infestiq; sunt, *Salust. Bell. Catal.*

expect the Divine Influence, as has been observed by Heathens ; (a) and they that do pray for it, and so receive it as to improve it, will never be condemned for not doing what they could not perform : The *excuse* of the *Slothful Servant* was retorted against himself ; *Matth. 25.* and he that was *faithful* to his Trust, was fully rewarded. *26, &c.* It must be owned that the Difficulties as to the Preceptive part of the Word, *are not small* ; our Obedience is express'd by such Phrases as do represent Difficulty in the performance, as Striving, Wrestling, Fighting, Labouring, Running, giving *all Diligence* : On this account 'tis said, *streight 2 Pet. 1.5.* *is the Gate, and narrow is the Way that leads to Lu. 13.24.* *Life* ; as we are commanded to *deny* our Lusts, *mortify* our Corruptions, *pull out a right Eye, Matth. 5.* *and cut off a right Hand,* to love them that *des- 29.* *pitefully use us,* and do *good to them that hate us, Matth. 5.* to take up the Cross tho' never so *heavy,* and *44.* never so *bloody.* It must be allow'd, that *Matth. 16.* the way of Obedience is not so easy as *24.* some may apprehend, thro' Pride, Self-love and Sloth : 'Tis not easy to unspot the Leopard, and whiten the Blackmoor, but yet this is no *sufficient Reason* for any Persons to despise the Word, and way of God to their own eternal ruin, however positive they may be for a time in their own deluded Judgment ; for it may be advanced as true, that the difficulty of Obedience is no greater, than *what* *is necessary* to answer some Ends worthy of

(a) Whitby of *Divine Assistance* in his *Comment.* Allen of *Assistance,* Trewman's *Moral Impotency.*

God, such as his own Glory, and our Happiness. We are in a state of Tryal, as Probationers for Eternity, and without some Difficulty, there can be no Tryal. The great irksomness of Obedience lies in Self-denial, as contrary to our natural Pride and Self-love; and a *Self-abdication* is requisite for the honour of God, and real good of the Immortal Soul: Surely the merciful Lawgiver takes no delight in perplexing his Creatures, he no more orders what is *Cruel*, than what is *Impertinent*; but he most wisely appoints what is *most apt* to answer the noblest Ends; and so his Commands to a considering Mind are nei-

1 Joh. 5. 3. *ther grievous nor frivolous*: 'Tis not his Mind,
 Isa. 59. 5. *that we should either spin a Spiders Web, or*
hatch a Cockatrice's Egg; that we should *sow the*
 Hos. 8. 7. *Wind, or reap the Wirlwind*, for he does not wil-
 Lam 3. 33. *lingly grieve the Children of Men*; and the great-
 est difficulties are therefore *owing to our selves*,
 as we are naturally corrupt, *inclined to Evil*,
 Matth. 11. *and averse to that which is Good. The Yoke*
 30. *is easy, and the Burthen is light*, but our Necks
 are stubborn, and our Wills perverse; we as
 Isa. 1. 17. *accustomed to do Evil, can't easily learn to do Well*;
 and so our own Sin, is the cause of all our
 Sorrow. And is it not fit to be considered by
 such Persons, as are apt to complain of this
 Matter, that the *way and work of Sin and Diso-*
bedience, is attended with great Difficulties,
 notwithstanding it is agreeable to corrupt Na-
 ture? Sinners are the greatest Slaves, their
 Work is either a *childish Impertinency*, or a *bru-*
tish and hellish Drudgery; the Sinner like the trou-
 ble. 57. 20. *bled Sea can't rest*, by ravenous Appetites, im-
 petuous Desires, jealous Thoughts, disturbing
 Fears,

Fears, distracting Cares, bitter Remembrances, he is oftentimes a Self-tormentor ; for 'tis not easy for him to extinguish all the sparks of common Ingenuity, to harden himself to an absolute fearless Insensibility ; but the *Eccho* of Conscience on the commission of some Sins, notwithstanding all stupifying Arts and Methods, will be a most *dreadful Alarm*, that will awaken him into a *Self-confusion*, and as a dark Spectrum, will haunt and terrifie him. Sometimes the Sins of such Persons are *contrary to each other*, as Pride, and Covetousness ; and what an unspeakable Torment must that create ? As the one swells, the other shrinks, like the dashing of contrary Waves, which raises a mighty Foam : Sinners are continually liable to such shameful Disappointments, and nauseous Repetitions, as must disturb and disquiet them ; and the common fruit of Sin even in this Life, is oftentimes so bitter, as renders them the greatest Object of *Contempt and Compassion* ; do's not their Fault and Folly very often blast their Reputation, melt down their Estates as Oar in a Furnace, scatter their Friends, diseased their Bodies, and expose them to Pain and Poverty, Disgrace and Distress ? The Great God do's often *write bitter things against them*, and cause them to *possess the Sins of their Youth* ; and who can express the anguish of a *self-accusing Conscience* ? When God shall create a *Light* in their dark Souls, and *shew them* their Sins : the Beams of such a Light will be as the very Sparks of the Eternal Fire, which while they discover Sin, destroy the Sinner. And after all, shall a Sinner take *so much Pains*, and expose himself to

so much Trouble, that he may for ever damn his Immortal Soul; and shall I complain of little difficulties in the way of Obedience, when the paths of Piety, may be to me the *paths of Peace*? 'Tis fit for us further to consider,

Heb. 6. 12. that all the *difficulties of Religion are conquerable* by the Grace of God, if we are not *Slothful*, but are *followers of them who through Faith and Patience do inherit the Promises*; if we propose the *same End*, and use the *same Means*, as we walk by the *same Rule*, and are under the *same Vital Influences*, the *same encouraging Promises*, and have the *same atoning Blood*, and *assisting Arm* of a Redeemer to apply to, we may be assured of the *same happy Success*;

Gal. 6. 9. for *we shall certainly reap if we faint not*. And these difficulties may not only be overcome at last, but by degrees they will become *easy and delightful*; self-denial in a little time may be a self-complacency, all the *Rocks of Difficulty* when struck often with a *Hand of Faith*, will melt into *Streams of Refreshment*; the *Way* that is now to an *Eye of Sense* full of *Bryars and Thorns*, when the *love of God* is shed *abroad in the Heart*, and we have accustom'd our selves to do well, will be a *Way of Pleasantness*, especially if we consider that the *glorious Rewards of the Eternal World*, will abundantly compensate all our pains in our way towards it: there is no proportion between what we do for God in one World, and what we shall receive from him in another: 'Tis but as a *single dust* of a *Ballance*, if compared with an *Eternal Weight of Glory*, as one drop of the *Bucket*, if compared with the *vast Ocean of Bliss and Joy*: Our light
Afflictions

Afflictions, which are but for a Moment, are not ^{2 Cor. 4.}
to be compared with the Glory that is to be reveal- ^{17.}
ed: Believe this, consider this, Oh trembling
Soul, and thou wilt neither fret at thy Work,
nor faint in thy Way; but thou wilt have
reason to say, that considering what God has
commanded, thou hast no reason to complain;
and if he had been pleased to command any
thing greater, thou shouldst see great reason
to comply: As the Prophet speaks to the Leper,
thou may'st speak to thy self, If he had com- ^{2 Kings 5.}
manded thee some great thing, wouldst thou not have ^{13.}
done it? How much more when he says to thee wash
and be clean?

4. Some do take occasion from the Grace of the Gospel, to abuse and misimprove the Word, whereby it becomes to them the *Savour of Death*: Some Persons do suck Poison from the Flowers of Paradise, the Blossoms of the Tree of Life, from Gospel Privileges and Promises, which are the great Cordials of believing, humble Souls; they draw filthy Water from the pure Wells of Salvation, as the *free Grace* of God is made by their Corruption, the occasion of the vilest Abominations. Some by Principle, and others by Practice, do turn the Grace of God into Wantonness, ^{Jude 4.} and do Sin, which of all things is most base, ^{Rom. 6. 1.} because Grace do's abound: Grace has abounded, and therefore do's their Sin as to themselves and others much more abound. When the Great Apostle put the Question in this matter, the Answer was, *God forbid!* As if he had said, the blessed God has forbidden it, and this above all things must I forbid also; let such a Thought and Inclination be for ever abhorred;
G 4 far

far be it from us to sin *freely*, because God can pardon *fully*. This indeed is practical Blasphemy, a virtual speaking Evil of the Majesty of Heaven, as if he did encourage Sin, and a horrid vilifying of his Gospel, as if by *gracious*, or rather *cruel Indulgence*, the Bible was little more than a *Book of Sports*; but whatever some may do, thro' the baseness and perverseness of their Temper, nothing is more certain, nor nothing more proper, than that the Grace of God do's and should prohibit, and not promote wilful Sin: Its *very appearance* shews forth this great Lesson, that we must deny *all ungodliness and worldly Lusts*, and live *soberly, righteously, and godly in this World*; and if we don't learn and practise this *important Instruction*, it is evident, that we don't compare one *Perfection of God with another*; as his Justice and Purity, with his Goodness and Mercy; and we don't compare the *Threatnings* of the Word with the *Promises*; the *awful Instances* of justly display'd Power, with the *bright Examples* of Favour and Compassion; and the *dreadful End* of an abused Gospel, with its benign Offers and Invitations in the *beginning*: if such Persons did, I am perswaded they would *stand in awe and sin not*, as all the displays of Divine Goodness have a tendency to lead considering Persons to *Repentance*. Some Personsthink that the miscarriages of good Men are not hateful to God, as he loves their Persons, he can't be displeas'd with their irregular Actions; the Law indeed condemns them, but *they are in Christ*, and *under Grace*, and therefore what they do is acceptable to God; and ready they are to

say

Titus 2.
11, 12.

Ps 4. 4.

Rom. 2. 8

say without due consideration, *that the Law is* 1 Tim. 1. 9. *not made for a righteous Person*, which at most can only signify, that it was not made and continued to *condemn a righteous Person*, when Rom. 4. 15. *failing in the strict observance of it*; but for *restraining and condemning the Licentious, and finally Disobedient*. It has been by some asserted, that the meaning is, *the Law is not made against the righteous Man*; but it doth not signify much to insist on that, tho' it is certain the *whole need not the Physician, but they that* Matth. 9. *are sick*; the Lawless are to be regulated by 12. Law, the Righteous by Obedience are as a *Law to themselves*: the Law do's as a *School-* Gal. 3. 24. *master*, correct the Wicked in Sin, but do's not condemn the Righteous for every Sin to eternal Death; tho' it is a *Rule of Life*, 'tis not Matth. 22. the *Term* of Salvation. We must love God 40. and our Neighbour, and this in Miniature *is the fulfilling the Law*; but a degree of Im- Rom. 13. perfection do's not expose under a Gospel to 10. eternal Condemnation. Sincerity in inward Inclination, and outward Endeavour, is accepted as Gospel-Perfection; but there is nothing in such a gracious Dispensation, that doth encourage the *least fault and failure*, unless it be in that Command, which is Impossible, that *we are to be perfect, as our heavenly* Matth. 5. *Father is perfect*; we are no more allowed in 48. *any Sin* under the Gospel, than they were who lived under the Law; yea, our Disobedience by virtue of the light and love of the Gospel, is more *highly criminal*; and therefore our pretence to any sinful Liberty, is the more absurd and inexcusable. If a Gospel Dispensation do's not *sanctify*, (let Persons talk in their

their Sleep as long as they please) it will never justify; a Saviour is a Sanctifier, and nothing will fill up the want of real Holiness, as the necessary preparation for eternal Happiness; some may fancy themselves the peculiar People of God, and please themselves with the Words of Balaam:

Numb. 23. *He hath not beheld Iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel; but the words do not signify that God do's not see Evil in his People, as it may refer to Sin; but at most, that he do's not see it with Approbation, as has been observed by the Learned, (a) for God is*

II. 66. 2. *of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity; but as the words do often signify (b) Affliction and Trouble, it may be interpreted, that God do's not*

Hab. 1. 13. *approve that Jacob and Israel should be afflicted, which is agreeable to all that Balaam said, and did on this Occasion: If any should think that God do's not see, or do's approve their Sin, let them be never so Holy in their own Eyes, or in the Eye of the World, they blaspheme the Name of God; and if the Gospel is not a Law to oblige all, it will be a Law to condemn them. If it has no Commands, it has no Promises, and so without Obedience their Faith is vain, and their Hope meer Presumption, a Spiders Web, too weak to secure any present Good, or prevent any threatned future Evil.*

II. As some do take occasion from the Gospel it self, so others do take occasion from the Mi-

(a) Gataker, Calvin.

(b) So they are render'd in Job 3. 10. Ps. 7. 14. 10. 7. 25. 18. Prov. 12. 21. New Translation.

nisters of the Gospel to despise the Word, whereby it may be to them the *Savour* of Death.

It must be owned that the Lord Redeemer, the King of Glory, is too often dishonoured by the *Mistakes* and *Miscarriages* of his Embassadors; the Treasure of the Gospel is too often despised, because lodged in *Earthen Vessels*. The Priests under the Law were to be *without Blemish*, but yet they were not *without* Lev. 21. *Faults*, they stood in need of a Sin-offering 17. for themselves. Gospel-Ministers are not without Sin, as the Great Apostle and High Priest of their Profession was, whose peculiar Excellency it was to be *holy, harmless, undefiled*, Heb. 7. 26. *and separate from Sinners, in whose Mouth was found no Guile*: None of his Servants are perfect, 1 Pet. 2. and some are very imperfect, who too often 22. give occasion to many to disgrace themselves with a *contempt of the Clergy*, not duly distinguishing between the *holy Office*, and *unholy Man*: they who should be the *Lights of the World*, are too often as common Lamps, that shine on the way of others, but *see not their own*: They are said to be *Stars* in the Hand of a Redeemer; but many are not like the *Star* that led the wise Men to Christ, which did not only *shine*, but *go before them*. Some do preach a Holy Jesus in the Pulpit, but after all read a Lecture of Atheism in their Lives; because of the Sins of the Priests, many do *abhor the Offering of the Lord*. The Car- 1 Sam. 2. buncle shines like Fire, but is hard as Ada- 17. mant; so the Gifts of some do sparkle, but for want of Grace, they make little Impression on themselves, and less on others; the
Head

Head is clear, but the Heart is hard : 'Tis said of the (a) Ancient Philosophers, that they had many *Scholars*, but *few Followers*, because their Practice did not agree with their Precepts ; this is too applicable in our Days. We find in the (b) Greek Historian, a solemn Decree of the *Athenians*, to erect a Monument with a Golden Crown, in honour to the Philosopher *Zeno*, for this great Reason, because he exhibited *his Life as a Pattern of the best Things, agreeably to the discourses which he made* ; without such an agreement Persons may *Preach*, but they don't *Teach*. Some there are who as in the time of *Eli*, desire the Priesthood for a morsel of Bread, and with *Judas* look to the Bag, and betray their Master. But yet after all, many are too apt to aggravate and expose the faults of the Servants of Christ, as if their Failures would lessen or justify their own Crimes. It is the black Character of some, that

2 Tim. 3. 3. *they are despisers of those that are good ; every good Man deserves an honourable regard, much more a holy useful Minister : To despise such is heinous Injustice, and horrid Impiety. If the Great God is the fountain of Honour, as he is in the highest Sense most worthy to receive Glory, Honour, and Power, then Creatures are no farther Honourable, than as they partake of his Excellency, and represent his Perfection ; that which stamps on any Person*

(a) Diog. Laert. in vitâ Zen.

(b) Lactantius.

a Character of Dignity, must be some (a) real excellence *inhering* or *adhering*, whereby it bears some resemblance of the Supream Being. Thus those that are Wise, Holy, or Powerful, by rightful Authority, are Honourable, in as much as they shew forth something Divine; and the brighter that is, the greater Respect is due to them: he in whom the Glory of the Deity is most Conspicuous, is most Honourable, as the Son of God, the Saviour of this Apostate World, who is the *brightness of the* Heb. 1. 3. *Fathers Glory, and the express Image of his Person*; and they who do most expressly imitate him, are most deserving among all the Children of Men. The natural Image of God is stamp'd on all Men, and therefore are we directed by the Great Apostle to *honour all Men*: But the 1 Pet. 2. Divine likeness doth most eminently appear 17. in a good Man, as he personates him in a *Moral*, as well as *Natural* Capacity, and so must have a double Title to Reverence and Esteem; if so, a Holy Minister must have the *best Patent* for Honour, as qualified by God with the noblest Endowments, and Commissioned by him in the highest Office: He is in some sense the *greatest Representative of God* upon II. 53. 3. Earth; and yet are these too often despised, and like their Great Master *rejected of Men*. The *Parson*, let him be never so Wise, Good, Faithful, and Laborious, shall too often be shewn on *the Stage*, as a Spectacle of Contempt to a silly Multitude, who can *out-vote* him, but will not *imitate him*; he shall be

(a) Norris;

made with Religion it self, the great Subject of Drollery and Divertisement, tho' he do's *sanctifie their Cup, and grace their Table*, and is intent on their Salvation. This is too common among Professors themselves in this Prophanes, Degenerate Age : 'Tis Prophaneness to despise *any thing* that never so remotely relates to God ; but to despise those who do more immediately act for God as his *Stewards and Embassadors*, is daring Impudence, and the basest Impiety. In the great Day of Decision, when Religion and Piety shall be publicly honoured and rewarded, the Righteous will stand with great boldness, and the Faces of these Despisers will be covered with Shame ; in that day you will think worse of your selves, than you do of such now : In the mean time consider, that *he that despiseth them, despiseth him that sent them* ; and such insolent Contempt, will be recompenced with eternal Shame and Disgrace. For want of such an awful apprehension of the Great Day of Accounts, God's Messengers and Prophets were mocked and misused in former Times ; the People smote Jeremiah with the Tongue, and Ezekiel they talkt against by the Walls, and in the Doors of their Houses. The Apostles who were Stars of the first Magnitude, were contemned by those who loved darkness rather than light ; they were made a Spectacles not of Pity, but Scorn, treated as the off-scouring of all Things, of whom the World was not worthy. This is the great policy of Satan in all Generations, to render the Ministry Contemprible, that the Word may be neglected, and thereby Salvation for ever prevented : but after all, they are only

Lu. 10. 16.

Jer. 18. 18.

Ezek. 30.

31.

John 3. 19

1 Cor. 4.

13.

Heb. 11.

38.

only despised by Sinners, who are the *most mistaken Creatures* in the whole Creation; and notwithstanding all their Buz and Noise, Boasting, and Self-blessing, are the most *contemptible part* of the Visible World; whatever may be the real or pretended faults and follies of some Ministers, such in general must be lookt on as the *Stewards of the Mysteries of Christ*, his High Commissioners to carry on a Treaty of Peace between the Eternal God, and Immortal Souls, and so are to be honoured for their *Work sake*. The *Priesthood* amongst *Jews* and *Heathens*, was treated as most Venerable by all that were wise and good. The first Priest was a King, and the greatest Personages were dignify'd by this Title, as *Abraham*, *Melchizedec*; and none of the *Plebeian* or *Equestrian* Order among the *Romans*, for many hundred Years, were allow'd the honour of the Priesthood: It was the reserved Dignity of the *Patritians*, in which they glory'd, when in the highest Rank and Order. (a) *King and Priest* among the *Heathens*, as well as *Jews*, were joined together: The Office this day is not less *Sacred*, tho' the Name is to many more *Contemptible*: The Behaviour of some is worse than that of the *Devil*; for she that was possess'd of a *Spirit of Divination*, declared of *Paul*

(a) Polybius, L. 6. Plutarch, Seneca. *The Ancient Kings of Rome were Priests, and the Emperor's were stiled Pontifices Maximi.*

Rex Anius, Rex idem, Hominum, Phæbiq; sacerdos, Virgil *Ænæid.* 3.

Aristotle assures us that King's both offer'd Sacrifices, and had the conduct of War, Κύριοι τῶν ἡσυχῶν, &c. *Ar. Polit.* l. 3. c. 10.

and

- A&S. 16. 17. and *Silas*, that *they were the Servants of the most high God, which did shew the way of Salvation*; some honour they have from *Hell*, while they are dishonoured on *Earth*. Let it seriously be consider'd by those who *take occasion from some commissioned Servants of Christ, as weak or wicked, by neglect and self-abuse, that the Faults of such Persons will no more excuse them, than the Graces of others will save them*. You don't justify your selves, while you condemn them; it highly becomes you to consider that the Great God has for wise Ends, declared it more proper to employ imperfect Men, than perfect Angels, in the Great Gospel Concern, even Men of *like Passions with their selves*. An Angel is sent to *Cornelius*, but *Peter* goes and preaches to him: Such are most fit to plead with Men, having the same Nature, experiencing the same inward Corruptions, and outward Difficulties, as being *also in the Body*; and what they deliver may be more suitable and impressing; a shining Seraphim may instruct with greater Light, and surprize with greater Glory; but may not so *suitably and sensibly direct to many Duties, which he never performed, or offer comfort under several Temptations and Troubles, which he never experienced*: Yea, the Great God himself in infinite Condescension may speak to his People, as he did from the Mount to *Israel*, and yet they, as what is more agreeable to their Nature and State, may desire that *Moses* himself might speak to them again: *Moses* had his Faults, such as cost him his Life, and the Prophets too; but if we believe not *Moses, nor the Prophets*, we are not likely
- A&S 14.
 15.
 A&S 10.
 Heb. 13. 3.
 Ex. 20. 19.
 Lu. 16. 31.

likely to be perswaded by one that may rise from the Dead : Christ (this Day) speaks by his Ministers, and whatever reason you think you have to despise them, you *must bear him or die* ; consider, that tho' the Pipes of the Sanctuary are not always clean, the Oil of the Sanctuary is always holy ; bring therefore your Lamps, fill and trim them, the more you have of this holy Oil, the more will you admire and love the Ministers of Christ, as they are in the hand of Christ, the Instruments of your Salvation ; for never did a gracious Soul despise a godly Minister : As he *covets* the good, so he will *cover* what is bad ; —a Heathen could suggest so much, that he that truly worships God, (a) loves also the Priests of God.

III. Some do take occasion from the *Professors* of the Gospel, to despise and neglect the Word, whereby it is to them the *Savour of Death*.

The true Disciples of Christ have in all Ages been Slander'd and Reviled, they have found by dreadful Experience, the words of their Lord *most true, that all manner of Evil should be spoke against them falsely*. The Primitive Christians were painted as wild Beasts, and then baited as such ; they were first made *black* by Mis-representation, and then *bloody* by Persecution ; and ever since, Reproach and Slander has been the Portion of the zealous

Mat. 5. 11.

(a) Qui bonâ fide colit Deos, amat, & Sacerdotes, Statius, Ep. D.

Rom. 2.
24.
1 Pet. 2.2.
Jude 12.
Col. 4 5.

2 Sam. 12.
14.

2 Cor. 6.
4, 6.

Col. 1 10
Tit. 2.10
Mat. 5.14.

Professors of the Christian Doctrine ; but tho' many have been abused by unjust Slanders, and uncharitable Censures, yet some of the Professors of a pure Religion, have given too great an occasion to the Enemies of it to despise, and pervert it to their own Destruction, as they have occasioned their *blaspheming the Name of God*, and the ways of God to be *evil spoken of by their Imprudences* ; not walking with *Wisdom towards them that are without*: Such do often lay too great a stress on little Things, and too small a stress on the greatest Things ; by Mis-management Religion has too often been a *Task* to themselves, and a *Terror* to others ; and by their *Impieties*, they have given greater occasion of Offence, exposing themselves not only as defective in *Prudence*, but *Piety*. 'Twas long ago observed by (a) the Historian, that the vilest Reproaches of the Primitive Christians, were owing to the base Practices of the Pseudo Christians: *David* himself, though a Man after God's own Heart, gave occasion to the *Enemies of the Lord to blaspheme*, by his aggravated Iniquities ; and many, very many since, have not *approved themselves to God*, as the Great Apostle did by *Pureness*: They have not walkt worthy of the Lord to *all well-pleasing*, by ordering their *Conversation aright*, *shunning the appearance of Evil*, and *adorning the Doctrine of their Lord and Saviour* ; and so have been spoken against, and have suffer'd as *Evil Doers*. Too many have appeared to be Covetous and Worldly, Proud

(a) Eusebius Ecl. Hist. 1. 4.

and Vain, Froward and Passionate, Morose and Sullen, Jealous and Censorious, Unjust and Tricking in their Trades and Commerce, False and Treacherous to their Words and Promises, Loose and Licentious, Contentious and Vexatious, by needless Suits, and legal Processes, *daring* the God of Peace and Purity, as if there were *no wise Men among them*, and hereby Religion has been wounded *in the House of her pretended Friends*; so shameful have been the Practises of some of all Parties and Denominations, whereby they have polluted the House of God, disgraced their Holy Religion, and deceived their own Souls! The dreadful Apostacy of some in this Age, is matter of great Lamentation, who can rob, while they think themselves in the High-way to Heaven, and whose Religion is only a *Cloak* to hide their villanous Injustice, secret Maliciousness, and prevailing Covetousness, such use their *Liberty as an occasion for the Flesh*: This is to be bewailed with Rivers of Tears, as 'tis a *Wound* to some, so it should be a *Warning* to others. Nothing is more certain, than that the holiest Persons thro' Mistake or Malice, have been often Vilify'd, their good Qualities have been Misconstrued and Ridicul'd, as *Hannah* was thought *Drunk* when Devout; and an awful Sense of God is reproached as Cowardice, a Conscientious Strictness for Preciseness, Sincerity and Honesty for Softness, and want of Policy and Parts, Devotion for Ignorance and Fear, Temperance for Unsociableness, Meekness for Lowness of Spirit, and Gravity for Pride and Moroseness of Temper: And thus

the Virtues of the best, even the Graces of the Divine Spirit, have been banter'd by an awkward artificial Dress, which Wit and Wick- edness has expos'd them in ; but yet the real Miscarriages of some Pretenders to Religion, are too open to be covered, and too abomi- nable to be excused ; but yet this do's not ex- cuse the Neglect and Contempt of the Word of God in any, because this is their *Sin and Folly*, and ought to be their great Shame and Sorrow. Did our Holy Religion allow or justifie such Irregularities and Enormities, we had then a very just Plea against it ; but in- stead of that, it do's forbid and condemn them ; we are to be *holy in all manner of Conversation*, to deny our selves, and not seek our own, but the things of others ; we are to be humble, think- ing more highly of others, than of our selves ; we are to be Spiritual, not loving the World, nor the things of the World ; we are to be affa- ble, as we are commanded, be ye courteous ; we are to be meek, forbearing with one another in Love, not easily provoked, but easily entreated ; we are to be just, faithful to our Word ; as we must defraud no Man, but rather according to the Apostle's advice, suffer our selves to be defrauded ; we are to be strict and cautious, shunning the appearance of Evil, loving and ten- der, not finding faults, but covering them ; not Busy-bodies in other Men's Matters. not Tale- bearers, but Peace-makers. These and such like are the admirable Rules of our Holy Religi- on, much more excellent than the Discourses of the wisest Heathens, and brightest Disco- veries of the Jews, as we are to deny all Un- godliness, and worldly Lusts, to which they had

not

1 Pet. 1. 15.

Matth. 16.

24

1 Cor. 10.

24.

Phil. 2. 3.

1 Joh. 2. 15.

1 Pet. 3. 8.

ph. 4. 2.

Jam. 3. 17.

Mark 10.

19

1 Cor. 6. 7.

1 Thes. 5.

22.

1 Pet. 4. 15.

Mat. 5. 9.

Titus 2.

12.

not a full regard, and to live soberly, righteously and godly in the World. If any profess Christianity, and yet are otherwise minded, and walk by another Rule, they are but Pretenders, Self-deceivers, and Self-destroyers, great Objects of Contempt and Compassion; their counterfeit shews the excellency of Religion, which is still the same, whatever change there may be for the worse amongst some Professors; it will always be found by those that try as they ought, *that the fear of the Lord Job 28.28. is Wisdom, and to depart from Evil, is Understanding*: The ways and works of Professors, must agree with their Words, or else others, without seeing a good Conversation will not be inclined to glorify God. What is said by a (a) Heathen concerning a follower of Socrates, is applicable to this Case, that he learned more by his Way, than his Word, his Life, than his Lessons. This indeed is the great reason that there is so great a decay in Religion, Persons pretend to Love, but don't live; to Faith, and don't fear: the Apostacy of some prevents the Conversion of others; as the bad Examples of some Christians hardens the Wicked in the vilest Abominations, but Religion is still the same, like its Author, the same yesterday, to day, and for ever; if our blessed Lord had not lived well, we should have had no reason to believe him, and if we don't live well, the World will have little reason to believe us; our pretended Religion is a real Contradicti-

(a) Plus ex moribus quam verbis Socratis traxit, Sen. Ep 11.

on, and our greatest Devotion meer Spiritual Nonsense : Let it be most seriously consider'd therefore by all, that *not every one that* Matth. 7. *saieth Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of* 21. *Heaven, but he that doth the will of his Heavenly Father.*

IV. Some do take occasion from the different *Circumstances* of good and bad Men in this World, to despise the Gospel of Christ, whereby it proves Death to them.

Most Men pass their Judgment according to the reports of Sense, as they walk by *Sight*, and not by *Faith* ; and therefore the present success of many Wicked, and great unsuccessfulness of many Righteous, as to the things of the World, is a Temptation to them to think, that 'tis not worth their while to attend to, and obey a Gospel, which doth not encourage, but rather discourage its Followers, as to the Honours, Profits and Pleasures of this Life ; but their Judgment is a *Mistake*, as their Life is a fatal *Miscarriage* : Virtue indeed do's sometimes grovel on the Earth, while Vice is advanced to a Throne : Innocence groans under Oppression, when Fraud and Violence triumphs in open view : some holy Men are disgraced and distressed from Year to Year, while the Wicked regale themselves in abounding Prosperity ; they flourish like the *green* Ps. 37. 35. *Bay-tree*, when the Righteous are as a wither'd Luke 16. *Stalk* ; a proud *Dives* enjoys his plentiful Table, his overflowing Cups, gorgeous Apparel, numerous Attendants, shining Equipage, and all the Sweets of Nature, when a holy *Lazarus* shall be cover'd with Sores, or Rags, a Com-

Companion with Dogs, waiting at a Door in Pain and Poverty. Our Experience assures the truth of this, and the Word of God doth attest it : The wise Preacher long ago observed, there was *one event to the clean and unclean, Ecclef. 9. to him that sacrificed, and him that sacrificed not ; 2.* and holy Job took notice in his day, that the *Tabernacles of the Robbers did prosper, and they Job 12. 7. that provoked God were secure ;* and the Royal Psalmist tells us, that the wicked *were inclosed in Ps. 17. 10. their own fat, and with their Mouth did speak proudly.* This Observation was the occasion of the bitter complaints of many excellent Persons ; the Prophet Jeremiah expostulated, *wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper ; and patient Jer. 12. 1. Job cry'd out, wherefore doth the wicked live, become old, and are mighty in Power, their Seed is establisht in their sight, their Houses are safe from fear, neither is the Rod of God upon them ; they spend their days in Wealth, and in a Moment go Job 21. 7, down to the Grave.* 'Twas this made the Psalmist cry out, *Verily I have cleansed my Heart in Ps. 73. 13. v. 2. vaine, and wash't my Hands in Innocency ? His Feet were almost gone, and his Steps had well nigh slipped into a dislike of the ways of God, and distrust of the Word of God : The wisest Heathens observed the same Difference, and remarked the same Discouragements : The (a) Eloquent Cicero takes notice of very different Circumstances of a virtuous Socrates, and a vile Dionysius ; and tells us, Time would fail,*

(a) Dies deficiat si velim numerare quibus bonis malè evenierit, nec minus si commemorem quibus Improbis, optimè, Cic. de Nat. Deor.

to reckon up how often it has been well with the Wicked, and bad with the Virtuous ; — and upon this view of Matters, some did deny the Deity, and others blasphemed him : as *Diagoras* ; which must be supposed to be owing to their Ignorance of a Future Judgment, and the Rewards and Punishments of the Eternal World. This matter is abundantly cleared by the Word of God, to the Satisfaction of every Considering Person, as it tells us that

- 1 Cor. 7. 29. *Time is short* ; and therefore the transient Circumstances of Persons in this World, are but as the pleasant or melancholy Figure on a Stage, which soon disappears : it tells us, the Rom. 2. 5. Wicked who prosper here, are reserved to the day of Destruction, unto the Day of Judgment to be 2 Pet. 2. 29. punished ; but it shall surely be well with them Matth. 25. 46. that fear God, for the Wicked shall go into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life Everlasting. 'Tis therefore for want of Consideration, that any take occasion from the Afflictions of the Righteous, and Prosperity of the Wicked, to despise the Word, and Way of God : did they think calmly and closely, they would soon apprehend, that all the Grandeur of this *Timfey World*, was but passing Pageantry ; but as a shining Bubble, in Comparison with the Glory of the other World. The Ps. 17. 14. Wicked have their Portion only in this Life, which is but as a single Moment to an Eternity ; their Prosperity is no Evidence of the Divine Favour, but in the midst of all their Grandeur and Glory, they will pine away under a secret wasting Curse ; that their Laughter is as Eccl. 7. 6. the crackling of Thorns under a Pot, a great, but transient Blaze, all their Songs and Triumphs in

in a few Moments, will be swallow'd up in one Everlasting Sigh and Groan : What an amazing difference is there between the rich Man on Earth, and the rich Man in Hell? his shining Glory is changed into the blackness of Darkness ; his seeming Blessings into an Eternal Curse ; he that prided himself in his Robes, is tormented in Flames ; he that was so often refreshed with his delicious Wine, wants one drop of Water to cool his Tongue ; and why then should we envy his growing, glittering Life, when the end of it is nothing less than eternal Death? Good Men indeed are often afflicted, *if need be they are in heaviness ; thro' many Tribulations they enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*: and 'tis highly reasonable it should be so ; for by these Afflictions their Redeemer is glorify'd in all his Characters and Perfections, as his Wisdom do's direct and instruct, his Power support, his Faithfulness secure, his Goodness supply, all his People in all their Troubles. The design of them all, is to *purify and perfect* his Saints, as he himself was made perfect by Suffering : His great and merciful Design is, to mortify their Corruptions by their Graces, brighten their Evidences, wean them from an evil World, deliver them from a tormenting fear of Death, and make them more meet for, and desirous of the Glories of the Eternal World ; and is not such a Design most worthy of a Redeemer, and most beneficial to the Redeemed? Such Afflictions are rather *Mercies* than *Miseries*, *Cordials* than *Curses*, tho' for the present they are *not joyous*, but *grievous*. In their sorest Tryals they may *injoy peace of Conscience*, which

Heb. 12. 11.

Prov. 15. 15. which is a *continual Feast*; a refreshing Sense of the Divine Favour, which is *better than Life*; and an enlivening Hope of a blessed Eternal World, which *makes them not ashamed*, and sometimes causes them to *rejoice with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory*; so that they can
 Rom. 5. 5. *rejoyce in Tribulation*: As it is their present Sanctification, and will issue in their final com-
 1 Pet. 1. 8. pleat Salvation, they can *count it all Joy*, when they fall into *diverse Temptations*, as their *Holiness and Happiness* are thereby promoted. The Rod of Affliction to them, is as the Rod of Aaron, it Blossoms, and then bears the Fruits of Righteousness and Peace. True Believers have no reason to pray against Afflictions, for their sanctify'd Afflictions may be their greatest Mercies; nor disturb themselves with anxious Cares and Fears, lest Tribulation should be their Portion; for at worst they can but carry the Cross, and if they do, they shall ascend to the Throne, and then will bless God for ever, for all the Troubles they met with in this sighing World: if they are under the afflicting Hand of God, they have no reason to *fret and faint, to flinch or fail*, whereby Duty is neglected, and Comfort despised; but by Faith and Patience they should approve themselves to God, and recommend Religion to the Eye of an observing World,
 Heb 6. 12. as becomes *those who are the followers of them who do inherit the Promises*, assuring themselves from the infallible Promise of God, that all seeming deficiencies of one World, shall be made up with the glorious Fulness of another, all their Pains and Aches, Disgraces and Disappointments, Disquiets and Distresses, all their Sighs

Sighs, Tears and Groans in a little while *shall be no more*, and they shall be made perfectly Holy, and perfectly Happy, with the likeness and fruition of their God for ever. All the Evils they now *feel*, and all that they *fear*, shall be for ever removed, or prevented, and tho' they weep for a time in the Valley, they shall stand on the Mount of Vision, and rejoice and triumph for ever; they shall take full Possession of the Reversions of Glory, and surely then they will be fully convinced that their *light Afflictions which were but for a Mo-* ^{2 Cor. 4.} *ment, are not to be compared with the Glory that* ^{17.} *is revealed.* It is but for thee to die, O thou Believing Soul, and thou art happy forever; and 'tis not in the power of Earth and Hell to prevent thy dying to Morrow; so that there may be but a few breaths between thee, and an Everlasting Heaven. Surely the firm lively Hope of an eternal weight of Glory, is sufficient to support thee under all the weights and pressures of a few groaning Moments; so that here is no room for a *Complaint*, for 'tis all well, or 'twill be all well in a little while, and that for ever. On the other hand the Prosperous Wicked are not to be envied, but pitied, as their *Prosperity do's destroy them*; ^{Prov. 1.32.} such Persons indeed do not consider and believe it in the midst of firm Health, secure Peace, abounding Plenty, shining Honours, encreasing Wealth, crouding Flatterers, stupifying Pleasures, and continual Hurries: But nothing is more certain, than that their Prosperity has a tendency to destroy them. The Providential goodness of God indeed *should lead* ^{Rom. 2 4.} *them to Repentance*, but their abuse of it will
issue

issue in their Destruction ; it doth *prevent* that which has an aptitude to save them, and *promote* that which hath an aptitude to destroy them : Do's it not often prevent serious Consideration , by soft Pleasures , or constant Hurries ? And without this Salvation, is not to be expected ; the warm Sun makes Men drouzy, and few in a day of Prosperity do consider : do's it not often prevent the Success of the means of Grace ? Sometimes it hinders *Attendance*, as he that bought the piece of Ground desired to be excused : and oftentimes it hinders *Attention*, they that are surfeited with the pleasures of Life, are hurry'd with the business of Life, cant worship God without Distraction ; the World fills or divides the Heart, that there is little or no room for the Word : it oftentimes hinders *Affection* ; if they are not flatter'd, they are soon prejudiced against the Word, and are ready to say to the Preacher, tho' never so serious, sound and skillful, *we will not hearken to thee, but will certainly do whatever goes out of our own Mouth* ; upon this account, *it is hard for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven* : Do's it not also often prevent *due Retention*, and *regular Reflection*, whereby the saving Influences of the Spirit are prevented ? He that minds the World, soon forgets the Word ; he that reflects much on his outward Concerns, is apt too seldom to review his Soul, and hearken to the Voice of Conscience, the Pulse of the World often prevents the Pulse of *Conscience*. And do's it not prevent the performance of many Duties that are necessary to Salvation ? In Prosperity Persons are apt to forget God, therefore

Moses

Lu. 14. 18.

Jer. 44. 16.

Matth. 19.
24.

Moses cautioned the Israelites against it, and with the King of Tyrus, to have their Hearts *Deut. 6. 12.* lifted up, because of their Riches: Persons in such a State, are generally *Tim. 3. 4.* lovers of Pleasures, more than lovers of God, and do not fear the Lord, and stand in awe; and therefore are neither disposed to act for God, or suffer for him, and thus that which had a tendency to save them, is prevented. Abused Prosperity do's also destroy Sinners, as it do's promote that which has an aptitude to promote their Destruction; for do's it not work powerfully on many Corruptions, as the Sun-Beams raise the stench of the Dunghil? Do's it not expose to many external Temptations? The first place the Devil tempted any in was Paradise, and few can keep their Integrity in it. Do's it not oftentimes provoke the blessed Spirit to retire? And then abused Prosperity is continued as a Snare and a Curse, which was the case of Pharaoh after due trial, and the Table of many by their abuse is a judicial Snare to them, and that which should have been for their Welfare, becomes a Trap, and *Pf. 69. 22.* an occasion of their falling: — and to say no more, if Persons in Prosperity are not serious, abused Prosperity do's soon promote their Apostacy, and thereby their Ruin: in a time of Tribulation such are apt to be offended, and with Demas to leave the Church of Christ for the sake of this World: few rich Men are number'd amongst the Martyrs, and many such by their Apostacy, have prevented their Salvation: Such therefore should not despise the Word and Ways of God, because they are prosperous, when the followers of Christ are sorely afflicted; for without great care their Prospe-

2 Cor. 4. 17. Prosperity will issue in eternal Destruction, while the Afflictions of the People of God are *working out for them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory* : The things of this World should not *endite our Petitions*, or engage our Affections, for they may be destructive Poyson ; we should not value our selves upon them, so as to despise others ; for to the best they are but a *Trust*, and to most they are a *Snare* ; we must use our Prosperity to the glory of God, and the good of others, whose *need* signifies to us some *Right* ; by Covetousness we wrong God, our Neighbour, and our selves at once. While we are using it, we must be careful that we don't abuse it, by Pride and Revenge, Luxury and Licentiousness, Sloth and Security, by Tempting or Contemning others : This is too common, and therefore they that would prevent the fatal abuse of their prosperous Condition, should be very careful that they maintain a deep Sense of their own Unworthiness, a thankful Sense of the Divine Goodness, they should govern their Passions, fear lest God should leave them to themselves, as Self-deceivers, and Self-destroyers ; they should be moderate in the enjoyment of their present Comforts, as Nature is contented with a little, Grace with less, tho' Lust is insatiable ; they should be often on the Knee, and retire from the Hurries and Diversions of Life, attend constantly on publick Ordinances, and encourage the Worship of God by their Generosity, as well as Company ; and there and elsewhere meditate on Death Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. By frequent Prayer for
Divine

Divine Influence, their Prosperity may be a real Blessing in this World, and the earnest of the Glory of a better ; and then such will not think that they are to be justified, who despise the Word of God, because many of its Hearers and Observers are afflicted ; for this is not the *effect of the Word*, but the *Order of Heaven for the Noblest Ends*. As to the Word, its observance has the greatest aptitude to promote our *truest Interest, greatest Honour, and most suitable Pleasures* in this World, as well as to secure the Felicities of the Eternal State ; and this I would have *young Persons* seriously consider, who are *beginning the World*, for their great Incouragement, that they may *begin with God*. Consider the *matter as to Pleasures, in a few Words* ; the Pleasures of the Wicked are not in the most proper Sense *true Pleasures* ; the meer vibration of a Nerve, or titillation of a Sense ; they are but *base and brutish*, the entertainment of the Inferior part of the Creation, the Pleasure of a Swine ; they are sometimes *devilish*, as the gratification of Pride, and satisfaction of Malice and Revenge ; they are very *short and transient*, but as the crackling blaze of Thorns under a Pot, and they are attended with *frequent Disquiets and Disappointments* ; the Honey has its *Sting*, and that *which is sweet in the Mouth, is as the Gall of Asps in the Belly*. Tho' the Pleasures of Sin are *scarce real*, the *Troubles of Sin* are sometimes very great, if you consider unsatisfy'd Desires, tormenting Fears, and the severe reflections of an accusing Conscience, which are the constant Attendants of sinful Pleasures, and to many Sinners, occasions an inexpressible Agony ; besides

Ecdl. 7. 9.

Job 20. 12.

sides the Word of God do's not forbid serious Persons, true *rational, regular Pleasure*; the design of Religion is not to make Persons Sullen and Sour, Heavy and Morose, for it commands them to *Rejoice evermore*; it ministers to their pleasant *Sensations* as to the present, their pleasant *Reflexions* as to what is past, and their *pleasant Prospects* as to what is future. Let but a serious Soul look inward, upward, backward, and forward, he will soon tast Pleasures that *Strangers intermeddle not with*, whose highest Delights, if compared with the inward Peace of a Christian, are but superficial Touches, transient Flashes, sordid Impurities, brutish Sensualities, or childish Foolerics. Religion do's not only promote the (a) *Pleasure of Thought*, which of all must be the greatest, but the *innocent Pleasures of a Sensitive Life*, inasmuch as it doth contribute to Health, and promotes length of Days; it adds sweetness to our temporal Comforts, and prevents many distracting Cares, and *tormenting Fears*, that do too often embitter all our Enjoyments; besides the Word of God in its Observance, *do's tend to Eternal Delights*, to the *Rivers of Pleasure at the Right Hand of God*; it do's partly *entitle* to, and partly *prepare for*, the glorious blissful Entertainments of an Everlasting Heaven; and surely the Pleasures of Sin, and Sense, are but as *Drudgery* and *Agony*, if compared with the Raptures and Transports of the Inhabitants of the Highest Heaven, while

(a) Veritatis Luce menti Hominis nihil dulcius, Cic. Acad. 2.

Sinners Groan and Rage, Weep and Wail in Eternal Darkness, thou wilt Sing and Rejoice in the fulness of Joy for ever, and therefore the *Word is not to be despised on this account* : And it becomes young Persons to consider also, that the observing the Word of God, will contribute to their truest and greatest Interest. Interest is the common Centre to which the Actions of Men are directed, (a) the *Diana* to which all sacrifice ; but many Persons do mistake their true Interest, and nothing is more apt than Obedience to the Word, to prevent such a Mistake, and thereby promote our real Advantage. He that observes the Word of God, is under the Blessing of God, who hath promised all Temporal Increase if *for his good*, and without that, the most busy Persons will labour Night and Day and catch nothing, for 'tis *He only gives us power to get Riches* ; they Deu. 8. 18. that seek *first the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Righteousness thereof*, will in due time find, if for their greatest good, that *all other things shall be added* : — Surely nothing is more likely to secure Success in this World, than the engaging an Omniscient, Omnipotent Being to be our Friend, our Covenant-Ally, our faithful constant Correspondent, by Purity and Prayer, who has the Keys of both Worlds in his Hands, and can in a Moment kill, or make alive, bless, or blast at Pleasure, when 'tis *the blessing of the Lord only that can make Rich* ; and do's Prov. 10. 22. not the Word of God direct to those Means and

(a) Prima ferè Vota, & cunctis notissima Templis
Divitiæ ut Crescant, &c. Juv.

Methods, that are most likely to 'secure Success, under the Influence of the Divine Blessing? Such as *Prudence*; for we are to be *wise*

Matth 10. 16. *as Serpents, as well as innocent as Doves: Such as Diligence*; we are not to be *slothful in Business*,

Rom. 12. 11. *but must learn of the Ant to be Active and Provident*; and do's not the *Hand of the Dili-*

Prov. 10. 4. *gent, with the leave or love of God make rich?* Such as *Temperance*; we are to be *temperate in*

all Things, to be Sober, and Sobriety, is to all a great Preservative, when Extravagancy

melts down the greatest Estate like Oar in a Furnace: Such as Civility, for we are to be Cour-

1 Pet. 1. 13. *teous*; and this is very endearing and ingaging to all with whom we converse, and there-

1 Pet. 3. 8. *by our Interest is promoted: Such as Univer-*

sal Justice and Honesty, whereby we are to do to others, as we would be done by, a Law

almost antiquated among Christians: the (a) Heathens learned it of the Christians, but now

many Christians need learn it of the most rude among the Heathens, who are often-

times more Honest, more punctual to their Word, faithful to their Promises, just and

kind to their Fellow-Creatures, than many of the zealous Professors of the Christian Reli-

gion, who can trick as they trade, and lie to those whom they pretend to love; but 'tis

certain the Gospel directs and obliges to strict Justice, and nothing has a greater aptitude to

promote the common welfare of a Nation, or

(a) *The Emperor Severus had that excellent Gospel Rule inscribed on the Doors of his Palace, which he said he learned of the Christians, Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris.*

the particular Interest of any, as it secures Reputation, and thereby a good Correspondence. I am fully perswaded, he that observes these Rules, is more likely to advance himself in the World, than any of the Wicked who make *Lies their Refuge*. Besides, by Religion, an Estate when got, is the better secured; 'tis under the protection of the Almighty, who can spread the Wing of his Providence, so *that no Evil shall come nigh the Dwelling*; and the Word of God directs to that constant Humility, Meekness, Compassion and Charity, that is most apt to prevent the Envy and Malice of ill-designing Persons, who often consume the most finisht Building, and blast the greatest Plenty; and 'tis the Word of God that directs how to enjoy what is secured, where- by a good *Man eats to the satisfying of his Soul*: And if after all a wicked Man should succeed in the World, his *Gain* will be found to be his *Loss*, and the more *he gets*, the more he *will lose*; for *what can he get?* nothing that can prevent Diseases as to his Body, or Distractions as to his Mind, nothing that can prevent the jealousy of his Spirit, the Torment of Fear, the Convulsions of a guilty Conscience, the Decays of a Body *wearing down* every day to a Grave, the Terrors of Death, or the Agonies of the Damned: such a Person by all *his Gain*, can't stop one Sand in his running Glass, much less turn up the Glass when run out: The greatest Estate can't purchase the leasure of *one Pulse* in the hurry of Death, his *Riches profit not in the day of Wrath*; the more such a Person has gained, the greater is *the loss*, for he must leave all behind him,

which will add to the bitterness of Death: — And what *then do's not such a Person lose?* Do's he not lose the Favour of God, the Blessings of a Redeemer, the Refreshments of the Divine Spirit, the Peace of his own Conscience, if not his Credit and Constitution, and after all an Eternal Heaven, and an Immortal Soul;

Mat. 8 36. and then *what will it profit a Man, if he should gain the whole World, and loose his Immortal Soul;* the whole World will profit him no more than a single Cypher, than a meer Bubble or Shadow; compare but *what he loses*, with *what he gets*, and 'tis easy to conclude, that he has labour'd all his Days, not merely to no Purpose, but to a very *bad one*; what he loses is most real, most excellent, most suitable, and most lasting: so that this is the true State of the case; A Wicked Man is *not sure* by all his Sweat and Labour to get *any thing*; if he do's get, he is not sure of any Credit and Comfort with it; and if he has, he is not sure to possess it one Day; if he should, he is sure he must one day *lose All*, and his loss will for ever be the greater; by how much the greater was his Gain; and after the loss of all Temporals, he must lose his Soul for ever. But now the Word of God do's *promote thy true Interest in this World, and secure to thee the*

Mat. 6 20. *durable Riches of the Eternal State, where neither Moth nor Rust do's corrupt, nor Thieves break in and steal*; and if so, thou hast no reason to despise the Word of God. What the (a) *Moralist* said concerning the Laws of the Philo-

(a) Plutarch.

sopher Solon, is true of the Precepts of the Gospel, that Persons may clearly perceive, that 'tis more for their Interest and Benefit to observe, than to violate them. As the Word of God when observed and improved, do's promote our truest Interest, so 'tis fit for young Persons who are naturally ambitious, to consider that it do's promote their truest Honour. They that obey the Word, are dignified by the most (a) excellent Endowments, such as Knowledge, Faith, Love, Hope, and Patience; so that the Righteous Man is more excellent than his Neighbour, Prov. 12. 26. which tho' the Wicked do not imitate, (b) yet do inwardly value, and secretly admire: And they are honoured by the most Illustrious Titles, and most Glorious Privileges; for they are the Friends and Favourites of the most High, adopted into the Royal Family of Heaven, into the very Line of Life, when the Wicked are cast out of the Presence of God with Abhorrence: To these is promised the Honour of this World, if for their good; *They that honour him, he will honour*; 1 Sam. 2. 30. and the observance of the Word of God, has a tendency to render them honourable amongst Men, as it gives them inward Worth, and obliges them to outward Usefulness, which are the two great Springs of Honour; the Divine Providence has often appeared for such, tho' for a time despised, their brightness has dazzled the Eyes of the observing World, it has raised the Poor out of the Dust,

(a) Ille gloriâ maximè excellit, qui Virtute plurimùm præstat. *Cic.*

(b) Aded gratiosa virtus est, ut insitum sit etiam malis probare meliora, *Sen. de Benef.*

Pl. 107. 41. *and lifted the Beggar out of the Dunghil, and set them amongst Princes, and made them to inherit a Throne of Glory. Joseph and Moses, David and Daniel, made a shining Figure in the midst of a wicked World : If the Wicked are honoured in this World, they have no reason to boast ; for their Honour is owing to a Mistake, Fancy, Humour, and Self-Interest; 'tis as transient as a Thought, as inconstant as a Wave : and what can the Applauses of the Wicked signify, when the Great God, the Fountain of Honour disgraces them, by disowning them ; and their own Consciences, when attended to, do actually condemn them ? If the Righteous as Pilgrims and Strangers should be despised and disgraced, they are sure of durable Riches and Honour, they will be pronounced Blessed, when the wicked World will be declared Accursed ; they will be approved of God, and applauded by Angels, when the Faces of the Wicked shall be covered with everlasting Shame and Confusion : — They shall appear as Kings and Priests unto God ; when all the Wicked shall be openly disgraced as the Servants of Sin, and the Slaves of Satan ; and surely the transient Respects of a giddy World, is not to be compared with the Approbation and Applause of God and Angels for ever : Therefore the Prosperity of some Wicked, and the Afflictions of some Righteous Persons, can be no just reason for despising and neglecting the Word of God. The way even for this World, that the Word directs to, will be found after all to be the safest, the steadiest, the surest, the shortest, and the sweetest ; however the blessed God for the greatest Reasons, may
 some-*

Prov. 8.
 18.

Rev. 5. 10.

sometimes think fit to Interpose. He that walketh uprightly, walk surely; the work of Righteousness shall be Peace, and the effect of Righteousness, Quietness and Assurance for ever. Surely it shall be well with them that fear God. Isa. 32. 17. Eccles. 8. 12.

C H A P. V.

The Cause of the Word's being the Saviour of Death consider'd in several Particulars.

THE Immediate Principal Cause of the Words being the Saviour of Death, is the wilful Sin of Man; whatever Occasions some may take, as has been consider'd, and whatever Excuses any may make, it is determined by the infallible Word of God, that at the Lust of Man is his ruin; for Lust conceived bringeth forth Sin, and Sin perfected brings forth Death: This is the Genealogy of Hell. Sin at first introduced into the World Natural Death, and allowed Sin, finally issues in Eternal Death, for the Wages of Sin is Death; dreadful Wages that kills the Worker: Sin is partly the Meritorious Cause of this Death, and partly the Moral Cause, as it do's provoke the Blessed God, the Fountain of Life to forsake the Soul, as it do's unfit it for the pure abodes of Glory, as it do's transform it in some degree into the likeness of Satan, for Sin is of the Devil; and as it do's most justly expose it to the execution of

V.

James 1. 15.

Rom. 6. 23.

I 4

the

the Divine Threatning, which declares, *the*
 Ezek.18.4. *Soul that sinneth, (so as not to repent of it)*
shall die : The despising, neglecting, opposing,
 and perverting the Gospel, must import an
 aggravated Fault, and most egregious Folly ;
 our Blessed Lord did most justly *upbraid some*
for it as very sinful and shameful, and it drew
 Tears from his Eyes : This is *the real Cause*
 of the Word's being to any the *Salvour of*
Death unto Death. An *improved Gospel is Life*,
 and an *abused Gospel is Death* ; *for the turning a-*
 Prov.1.32. *way the simple doth slay them*. This was appre-
 hended and declared by our blessed Lord and
 his Apostles in their day, to be the *Principal*
Cause of Death and Damnation ; and surely
 they were *infallible Judges*, in whose Judg-
 ment we ought to acquiesce, with whom it
 must be the most daring Insolence to *dispute*.
 It must be freely own'd, that the Gospel is a
 Dispensation of the most glorious Grace, and
 therefore *every degree of Sin* cannot issue in
 Death, as we are not *under the Law, but under*
 Rom.6.14. *Grace* ; 'tis fit therefore to be consider'd that it
 is *allowed, prevailing, unrepented Sin*, that is,
 the *proper Cause* of this Spiritual and Eternal
 Death. This is the Root of Bitterness, the
 cursed Seed that produces the dreadful Har-
 vest ; but yet the same Sin is not to all the
 same *cause* of Misery ; we shall therefore con-
 sider what allowed Sins have been, and still
 are the principal Causes of Death, that Sin-
 ners may be awakened into a serious Consi-
 deration, and excited to a warm endeavour,
 under the Influence of the Divine Spirit,
 so to Repent, and Reform, as to prevent their
 Eternal Damnation :

I. *Allow-*

I. *Allowed Ignorance.*

That there is a wilful culpable Ignorance, is too obvious to be question'd, 'tis matter of Astonishment to consider how ignorant some are under a Dispensation of Light: How dark in the midst of Sun-beams, as well as cold under warm Influences, and dead under Vital Operations. There is a degree of Knowledge necessary to Salvation; the Blind are more likely to fall into the Ditch, than to find their way thro' the streight Gate: Without Knowledge *the Heart is not good*, and some un-Prov. 19. der a Gospel Dispensation, as well as in the 2. dark desolate Places of the Earth, do perish for *lack of Knowledge*; the Light of the Gos-Hos. 4. 6. pel if attended to, is very bright, but many shut their Eyes against it; they *love Darknes*,Joh. 3. 19. rather than Light, because their Deeds are Evil; the Light do's shew them too much to themselves, expose their Faults and Follies to the Eye of Conscience, and so they are willingly dark, that they may not be uneasy. Some in the first dawnings of a Gospel Day, did not like to retain God in their Knowledge, and their Rom. 1. Cry was, depart from us, for we desire not the 28. Knowledge of thy Ways; and to many now, the 2^o Cor. 4. 3. Gospel is hid as to Internal Manifestation, because they are lost in their wilful Ignorance, and allowed Wickedness: Some for want of due Education can't read the Word, others for want of due Inclination don't attend on the Word; and others from Pride don't apprehend they need Instruction either by Reading, Hearing, or Consulting, and comparing
Spiri-

1 Cor. 2. *Spiritual Things with Spiritual.* This was the
 13. case of the *Pharisees*, who cry'd out, *are we*
 John 9. *blind also?* They think they see the Importance
 40. and Propriety of Truths, as they are in Je-
 sus; but their Eye is but as a Glass one, that
 do's not discern, and cannot direct; their ve-
 ry Pride blinds them. Ignorance was one
 cause of the *Death of Christ*, for if they had
 1 Cor. 2. 8. *known him*, they would not have crucify'd him;
 and 'tis certainly one cause of the *Death of*
Souls, they neglect the Word by Carelessness,
 Hurry, or Presumption, and no wonder then
 if they are *not taught of God*, the want of whose
 saving Instruction must promote their Dam-
 nation. Parents and Masters therefore should
 instruct their Servants and Children, as they
 love their Souls; not only give them *Leave*,
 but Direction and Encouragement to read
 and attend on the Word, that they may be
light in the Lord, and not think that the pub-
 lick Instructions of Ministers, or Corrections
 of Magistrates, do excuse their own sloth-
 ful and shameful Neglects. Private Instructi-
 on should prepare for publick Ministrations,
 the Closet and Catechism should fit for the
 Sanctuary and Temple: Some light added e-
 very Day, will make the Lords Day more bright
 and glorious.

2. *Habitual Inconsideration.*

Man by the power of Thought and Consi-
 deration, is raised above the brutal part of the
 Creation, and is ally'd to the Glorious An-
 gels; but yet many Persons *think* little more
 than the Brutes that perish: By neglect they
 disable

disable their thinking faculty, so that there is but a little difference between some Men and Beasts; such are directed by the Spirit of God, to learn of *the Ox and Ass*, who *know their Owner, and their Masters Crib*; and of the labouring Ant, that provides against a time of Scarcity; but notwithstanding such Directions, many spend their Days in a thoughtless Oiscitancy, neither considering the *Great End*, nor *fixed Rule* of Life: 'Tis said of some to their unspeakable shame, *that God is not in all their Thoughts*; think they do, for Thought do's as constantly flow from the Intellectual Fountain, as the Beams issue forth from the Sun; but yet in the variety of their Thoughts, there is *no God*: There is a Shadow, a Toy, a Bubble, a frivolous or mischievous Things; but in the *multitude of their Thoughts within them*, the Deity who gave them their Thinking Power, is scarce ever to be found: Strange indeed! That he by *whom* they think should be *least thought* of by them, as they don't think on him, it can be no wonder that they don't consider his Word, whereby the most apt and sufficient Meen for their Salvation is neglected. Consideration is necessary to Reformation, we must *consider our Ways*, before we can *turn our Feet to the Divine Testimonies*. 'Twas this brought the Prodigal back to his Father's House, and the want of this, is the ruin of Thousands: Young Persons especially do generally employ their Thoughts about *little Things*, or *ill Things*, whereby they degrade and desecrate their thinking Power; but the glorious Perfections of the Deity, the wonderful Performances of a Saviour, the awful Concerns

cerns of an Immortal Soul, and the many other useful Important Lessons of a Gospel, are not duly considered by them; the Objects of Sense ingross their Thoughts and Time, and they have little Leisure, because but little Inclination, to *set the Eternal World in view*, as 'tis out of Sight, 'tis out of Mind; and no wonder then if such Persons perish under a Dispensation of Light and Love: The

Ps. 119.

105.

Word of God is a *Light to our Feet, and a Lantern to our Paths*; but if we don't *open the Eye*, and attend to it, it can neither Conduct nor Comfort us, it will no more direct us, than Shadows and Darknes: Consideration is as necessary as Knowledge, the one to *fix the End*, the other to keep the End *in View*. If we *know our Way*, and yet don't *mind it*, we shall soon lose it; a wandering Eye will deceive us, as a dark Eye can't direct us. The Word without Consideration can have no Vital Influence on the Spirit; 'tis this sets Matters *in view*, and brings Grace into *Act*, without which there is little more than Darknes and Death: Consideration is as necessary for the Recovery of a *lost Soul*, as the Application of a suitable Medicine is for the restoring of a *Distemper'd Body*, or a good Digestion for the maintaining constant Health. 'Tis for want of due Thought, that many Sinners are so very wicked, and many Saints so very weak.

3. Prevailing Infidelity.

Faith is necessary to Salvation, without *this*
 Heb. 11. 6. *we can't please God, nor profit by his Word*; without this mixture the best Medicine wants
 a fa-

a saving Ingredient: 'Twas this hinder'd the desir'd Success of the Gracious Words, and Glorious Works of our Blessed Lord, who spake and wrought as *never Man did*; and this do's in our Day obstruct the saving tendency of Gospel Ministrations, as there is in many a *curst Heart of Unbelief, whereby they depart from the living God.* Did Persons firmly believe that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and the only Saviour of this Apostate World, that *he that hath the Son hath Life, and he that hath not the Son, hath not Life,* which is the Record of Heaven; the most certain important Truth, as that Word must signify. If Men fully believed that an Eternal Heaven was the glorious Reward of the lovers of Jesus, and an everlasting Hell, the just Punishment of them that despise him; it could not be supposed, but that Persons would bring their Consciences under the Authority of the Word, and live under the power of it, whereby it would be to them the *Savour of Life*. Many Professors who do think they believe the Important Contents of the Gospel, are under the Power of Infidelity, when neither the Authority nor Benignity of Christ, the eternal Glory of Heaven, and the everlasting Agonies of Hell do's restrain them from Sin, nor constrain them to Duty: Alas! but few in the Church, as well as in the World, have that Faith which is *the Evidence of Things not seen, and the Substance of Things hoped for*: Invisible Things are not made evident, and future Things present; and so either they have no Faith, or it do's not operate. Practical Infidelity is the ruin of Immortal Souls, as Persons don't credit the written

Heb. 3. 12.

1 John 5.

12.

Heb. 11. 1.

written Word, or because they can't disprove it, give a faint assent to it; but don't fully believe and consider it, as the only Rule of their Conversation as to this World, and the only measure of expectation as to the other. If any did pretend that they did believe, that in a little while they should remove from their present Abode, to a distant part of the World, and yet did not think often of it, speak much about it, and duly prepare for it, one might easily suppose that their Faith was but a Pretence, a meer waking Dream; and if any pretend to believe the Word of God, as to the awful concerns of an everlasting World, and don't conform to it, surely their Faith is vain.

4. *Secret Malignity.*

The Nature of Man ever since the Apostacy, has been contrary to the Nature and Will of God, so that in every one not renewed by the Grace of God, there is a secret hatred of the Deity; some in Scripture are represented as *God-haters*; a most dismal Character! if written in view, to what Disgrace, Contempt and Confusion would it expose? If 'tis said of a Servant, he hates his Master, of a Child, he hates his Parent, the very sound of it strikes with horror; but alas! what is that to the hatred of God, the greatest and best of Beings, the Original, Support, and End of all; he is the Admiration of Angels, the Envy of Devils, and yet is he the Object of the hatred of those, who received their Being from him, and by whom it has been secured, supplied,

plied, and sweetned from Moment to Moment. How dismal a case is it? How ignominious a Temper, and yet how common? Wicked Men are not to be supposed to hate God as a *Benefactor*, but as a *Sovereign*; they will not submit to the *Commanding Power* of his Word, nor the *Disposing Power* of his Providence; but rather than not have their *own Will*, they'll dispute his Prerogative, challenge his Rightful Authority, and *dare* his Omnipotence; tho' he can *restrain* on them in a Moment, and make them know, that as the *Right* is his, so Vengeance is his, by *tearing them in pieces, so that none shall deliver.* Ps. 50.2 This hatred is the more shameful, because *causeless*, they hate him *without a cause*; there is no reason for it, but the strongest reason imaginable against it; and yet do's it reign in the Hearts of the Children of Disobedience; however it may be concealed by some, and excused by others, it do's govern in every impenitent Sinner, such are said to have *hated Christ and his Father*, and Joh. 15 therefore would not *come unto him, that they* 25. *might have Life:* This hatred is attended with Joh. 5.4 a secret or open contempt of the Deity, which renders it more Criminal and Shameful, than that of *Devils*; who tho' they blaspheme God, don't despise him: There are different Degrees of this cursed Temper, and where there is not a *due love* to God, there is such a Degree of it, as hinders the Success of the Word: prevailing Disaffection to the commanding and disposing Will of God, is one of the great causes of the Unsuccessfulness of a Gospel Dispensation, whereby the Word becomes to such *the Savour of Death*; for they that love
the

the Deity, will love his Image, his Word, his Ways, and readily and cheerfully obey his Command, and submit to his Pleasure, without *compounding* with Sin, or *complaining* of Sorrow; the voice of Love is both as to Precept and Providence, Lord, thy *Will be done*. True Lovers can have but one Will.

5. *Contracted Obduracy and Insensibility.*

Sinners by a wilful continued course of Sinning, do strangely harden their Hearts, and stupify their Consciences under the most softning and awakening Means: This is a sad and common Case, many that have had tender Consciences in their younger Days, on whom the Word has made deep Impressions, by allowing themselves in known willful Sins, have become as hard as the Rock; so that the Word of God has been but as a *Voice*, that loses its *force* by frequent Repetition, by accustoming themselves to Sin, they have grown harder and harder, like the Foot of the Traveller by constant Progress; the thorn of Reproof has not been felt by them, and so the Word is to them *the Savour of Death*; where it has not a vital Influence, it will have a most deadly Effect; if it do's not meet with, or make a tender Conscience, it never giveth Life: The Word is said to be the *Sword* of the Spirit, a *Two-edged Sword*, as it cuts its way either by working on the *hopes* or *fears* of the Hearers, which are the two great Springs of Action; but if the Conscience is hardned, it soon loses its edge and force: And how usual is this! some that have been awakened
by

by a serious warm Discourse, and thereby put on due Resolution to forsake their Sin, and walk closely with their God ; by a Jest, an idle Companion, a needless Visit, a vain Book, or some little Divertisement on the Lords Day, have been hardned again ; and like heated Iron by its former warmth, have become much more hard ; and hereby they have most justly provoked the Blessed Spirit to retire, and then the most affecting Discourse has been but little better to them, than a *Tale that is told*. This indeed is a dismal Case, for such are not very likely to be awakened, but by the very flames of Hell : One of the greatest Blessings on this side Heaven is a *tender Conscience*, as it either prevents Sin, or smites for Sin, as *Dauids Heart smote him, after that he* 2 Sam. 24 *had number'd the People ;* when the Mind is duly enlightned, whereby *the Spirit of Man is* Prov. 20 *as the Candle of the Lord, searching the inward parts* 27. *of the Belly ;* when it is really sanctified, and made pure, as was the mind of the Great Apostle, who declared that *he lived in all good Con-* Acts 23. 1. *science before God ;* when it puts a Person on an ingenuous Confession of Sin, and earnest petition for Pardon, makes him cry out, *Oh* 2 Sam. 24. *Lord I have done wickedly, forgive the Sin of* 17. *thy Servant, enter not into Judgment with me,* Pf. 143. 2. *but create in me a clean Heart, and renew a right* Pf. 51. 10. *Spirit within me ;* when it brings a Person to a Self-abasement, a due Sense of his own villainess, causing him to cry out, *Father, I have* Lu. 15. 21. *sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son ;* as the Heart of *Josiah* was tender, when he humbled himself before the Lord ; when it do's accuse and

condemn, excuse and absolve, as the Action is good or bad ; when as to Evil, it cries out
 1 Sam. 24. 6. as *David*, *The Lord forbid, that I should do this thing unto my Master ; and as to good, it gives confidence towards God and Man ;* when the Mind is under such an awe of God, as makes the
 Gen. 39. 9. Man cry out, *how can I do this Wickedness, and sin against God ?* And speaks to the Man under
 2 Sam. 2. 26. a Temptation, as *Abner* to *Joab*, *knowest thou not that it will be bitterness in the latter end ?* and when hereupon the Person has a Respect to all the Commandments of God, and will rather suffer than Sin, yea, will suffer wrongfully for Conscience towards God, and will not be uneasy at Reproof, but esteem it one of the kindest Offices can be done him ; as *David*
 Ps. 119. 6. said, *Let the Righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness, and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent Oil, which shall not break my Head.* Then is the Conscience tender, and the Word has a most powerful, grateful Influence on it, like Oil it penetrates, and softens more and more ; but how few such Persons are there in a corrupt degenerate Age ? How few will say with Holy *Job*, when tempted to Injustice, Uncleaness, or Unfaithfulness to their Word and Promise ; *I will hold fast my Integrity, I will not let it go, my Heart shall not reproach me as long as I live.* If their Conscience was tender, they would not do Evil to profit themselves, and they would do good, tho' they did not please others ; what was lawful they would not exceed in, and what was doubtful, they would not proceed in ; but alas ! the Consciences of most are secure, so that were it not for the Law of Man, the Restraints and Rebukes of Magi-

Magistrates, the Earth would be as the very Confines and Neighbourhood of Hell. This Security, this Insensibility is the ruin of Souls, the great Obstacle to the success of the Word; Persons make a Covenant with Death, and with Hell are at an agreement, for they make Liestheir Refuge, and under Falshood hide themselves; and no wonder then if the Word do's only enrage them, and not Spiritually enliven them; so that some Hearers may go out of the Sanctuary like the unclean Spirit, which took to himself seven other Spirits, more wicked than himself, and so their last State is worse than their first.— This is sometimes the Cause, and sometimes the Effect of the abused mis-improved Word. II. 28. 19. Mat. 12. 45.

6. Predominant Pride and Presumption.

This is the cause of the Words being to many, the Savour of Death in this Day, as it was the great hindrance to the success of the Gospel in the first Age of the Church; by this the Gospel was to the Jews a Stumbling-block, and to the Greeks Foolishness: Rome and Athens could not stoop to the foolishness of Preaching, and the Pride of many inclines and emboldens them to think, if not say, that that is foolish Preaching, which is both the Wisdom, and the Power of God; whereby the Word is despised and neglected to their present Shame, and future Sorrow. Pride is both the Nature and the Torment of Satan, it turn'd the Angel of Light into an Angel of Darkness; it was, we may suppose, the cause of his Apostacy, and is the continued Spring of his Misery: Pride in its Punishment is called the *Condemnation of the Devil*. 1 Cor. 1. 23. 1 Cor. 1. 24.

vil, and a proud Man is little better than a walking Devil; Satan in a visible Shape, his Image he bears, his Business he performs, his Pleasure he serves, and his Interest he promotes. Let such an one swell never so big in his own Eye, so as to dare his God, and huff his Fellow-Creatures, he is an object of Contempt, as he is despised by his Maker, who *resists the Proud*; hated by the World, as others don't give what he vainly expects, and he don't give what others may justly require, due Respect and Regard to Persons of an equal Rank and Station; he is a continual Torment to himself, by too nice Observances, and too deep Resentments; as he is above others in Vanity, he is as much below himself and others in Peace and Tranquility; as he greatens in his own view, he lessens in the Eyes of others: A high look makes the Head giddy, and it often makes the Heart heavy, a proud Temper, is directly opposite to the Spirit of the Gospel; he that is under the power of it, is not convinced that he is Spiritually sick, and *needs a Physician*, and thereby the saving Remedy is neglected. We are told, that the whole *need not a Physician, and that our Blessed Lord came not to call the Righteous, but Sinners to Repentance*. They that through vain Imaginations, do as the Pharisees did, look upon themselves Sound, and Righteous, will despise both the Sanctification, and Righteousness of a Saviour. Many think themselves better than others, when they are not as good as they should be, they pride themselves in the External, Superficial, and Circumstantial parts of Religion; with

a meer

James 4.
6.

Mat. 9.
12, 13.

a meer form of Godliness, and that hinders their feeling the Power of it : the Purity of the Gospel is an offence to such, who can satisfy themselves with an outward Profession, without any regard to inward Sincerity and Spirituality ; who think that bearing the Cross, denying themselves, and filling up the measure of the sufferings of Christ with Patience and Perseverance, is not an essential part of Practical Religion, the want of it to them, is neither matter of Shame nor Sorrow. Many with the Church of Laodicea think themselves Rich, and en-
creased in Goods, and stand in no need of any thing, when they are Poor and Blind, and Miserable, and Naked, and stand in need of all Things : and so the offers of the Gospel are rejected, because their own wants are not discerned ; their Eyes are not open'd to see their Guilt and Danger, instead of crying out with the Publican, *Lord be merciful to me a Sinner,* they with the mistaken proud Pharisee, bless
 God that they are not as other Men : Such are far from being as little Children, and no wonder then if they don't enter into the Kingdom of Christ : Their Pride goes before a fall, they first fall into Sin, and then into Misery. The Gate is said to be *streight,* and while they *swell,* they cannot enter, and though never so big in their own fancy, will not be great, nor yet the least in the Kingdom of God ; for they are excluded till they seem to themselves as nothing, and their Saviour appears to them as their all in all : They must vanish, and he must fill up the whole Stage, and then the Word will instruct them while they are crying out,
Lord, what shall we do to be saved ?

2 Tim. 3. 5.

Rev. 3. 17.

Luke 18.

11, 13.

Mat. 18

Acts 16.

30.

7. Inordinate Self-Love,

Is oftentimes the cause of the Words being *the Savour of Death* : There is a Self-love that is Regular, and Praise-worthy, or else Self-preservation could not be necessary, nor Self-murder Criminal ; and we cannot love *our*

Mat. 19. 19. *Neighbour as our selves*, unless *Self* be the Measure, and not the Motive of our Love. The

Eph. 5. 29. Apostle tells us, that *no Man hateth his own Flesh, but loveth and cherisheth it*, as he doth not, so he ought not. No Person is allowed by God to be his *own Enemy*, a Self-hater, he has no right to debase himself, or distress himself ; but is always obliged to follow after *Purity and Peace*, which doth enoble his Nature, and secure and sweeten his State. Tho' this must be supposed as clear from the Light of Nature, as well as Revelation, yet the Love of most Persons is inordinate, self-destructive, opposite to the Glory and Interest of a Redeemer, and the common good of *Mankind* : some are said

2 Tim. 3. 1. to be *Lovers of themselves so as to seek their own, and*
 Phil. 2. 21. *not the things of Christ, nor the things of others* ; and this is not merely the Character of the common busy Crowd, who live to themselves, and for themselves, as *Self* is their Centre, and their End ; but of many Professors, who though they attend on the Word, do receive little or no good because so full of themselves ; which was the case of the *Pharisees* : Some are *self-conceited*, as has been already consider'd, *wise in their own Eyes* ; some are *self-confident*, *leaning to their own Understandings* ; some are *self-willed*, not denying themselves ; some are *self-*

Prov. 16.
 12.

self-interested, always sacrificing to their own Hab. 1. 16.
Nets; and some are self-delighting, warming Isa. 50. 11.
themselves in the sparks of their own Fire: and
hereby the Gospel is rejected, as it discovers
our Folly, rebukes our Confidence, contra-
dicts our Will, and most strictly forbids Self-
seeking, and Self-pleasing, as dishonourable
to a Redeemer, and injurious to Fellow-Chri-
stians. The Gospel commands all its Obser-
vers, to deny themselves for the good of o-
thers, and the honour of Christ; to take up
the Cross when call'd to it, as the way to the
Crown; to pluck out a right Eye, and cut off a Matth. 5.
right Hand, if it tempts to Sin, or hinders Du- 29.
ty; to forsake all, rather than not cleave to
that which is good; and therefore is very di-
stastful and disagreeable to corrupt carnal
Self. Indeed the Word of God do's not for-
bid all Self-love, but do's propose and pro-
mote that which tends to our truest Interest,
and greatest Comfort: He that getteth Wis-
dom doth love his own Soul, and he that keepeth it Prov. 15.
shall find good; but yet it doth forbid Self- 8.
conceit, as we are not to think of our selves
beyond what we ought to think; Woe unto them Prov. 3. 7.
that are wise in their own Eyes, and prudent in Rom 12. 3.
their own Conceit, who trust in themselves that II. 5. 21.
they are Righteous, and despise others: It doth Lu. 18. 9.
forbid Self-reliance, for the way of Man is not
in himself, it is not in Man that walketh to direct Jer. 10. 23.
his Steps; we are therefore to trust in the
Lord with all our heart, and in all our ways ac-
knowledge him, that he may direct our Paths; for Prov. 3.
tho' a Mans Heart deviseth his Way, yet the Lord 5, 6.
directeth his Steps, so that we can't say with him II. 10. 13.
in the Prophet, by the strength of my Hand have I

done it, and by my Wisdom, for I am prudent : It forbids *Self-complacence*, we are not allow'd to say with the vain Prince, in the Contemplation of our own Performances, *Is not this great Babylon that I have built?* or with the rich Man, in our great abundance, *Soul take thy ease, thou hast much Goods laid up for many Years.* It forbids *Self-will*, our proceeding with obstinate Resolution in our own Choice and Measures, without due regard to others, either as to Offence or Injury ; they that are strong are commanded to *bear the Infirmities of the weak*, and not to please themselves ; but every one is to *please his Neighbour, for his good to Edification* : We are to give no Offence, says the Great Apostle, but *please all Men in all things, not seeking our own Profit, but the Profit of many, that they may be saved*, following his bright Example ; who to the weak became as weak, and made himself all-things to all Men, that he might g in some ; yea, he made himself a Servant to all, that he might gain the more. The Word do's also forbid *immoderate Self-interest*. This is the great Spring of *Injustice*, for such Persons as are influenced by it, will trample upon all Right, violate the Laws of God, Men, and Conscience, falsify their Trust, betray their Friends, supplant their Relatives, that they may gain their Point : This is the Spring of *Uncharitableness*, and makes all they do and say Mercenary ; the Poor is hereby despised, and the Rich flatter'd, to add to their Heap ; yea, 'tis the great Root of most of the Disorders and Mischiefs in the World ; Self quarrels with all, falsifies with all, undermines all, ensnares all, disturbs all, one single Sylla-
ble

Dan. 4 30.

Lu 12 19.

Rom. 15.

1, 2, 3.

1 Cor. 10.

33.

1 Cor. 9.

22. 19.

ble disquiets the whole World; therefore do's the pure and peaceable Gospel direct and oblige to Charity, which *seeketh not its own, to bear one anothers burthens*, and so fulfil the Law of Christ: These Prohibitions are contrary to corrupt Self, and hence it is that the Word is rejected, and thereby it becomes *the Saviour of Death*; Persons will not abdicate and abandon carnal beloved Self, and so the Word is not received in the Love and Power of it.

8. Reigning Earthliness, and Worldly-mindedness.

Whatever Excuses any may make, some Persons are Worldly-minded, they lay up as the *Children of this World Treasures* for themselves, but are not *rich towards God*; they are very *pressing* in the pursuit of Worldly Things, their Life is a continual Hurry, so that they have no *vacation* for God, and an Immortal Soul. They *hast to be Rich, and cannot be Innocent*, they are *ready to remove the Land-marks, drive away the Asses of the Fatherless, and take the Widows Ox for a Pledge, as wild Asses in the Desert they go forth to work, rising betimes for a Prey; they cause the Naked to lodge without Clothing, they pluck the Fatherless from the Breast, and take away the Sheaf from the Hungry*; as they will use any mean to encrease their Substance, so they are always *anxious* about its Security; the *abundance of the Rich will not suffer him to sleep*, but they cry out with the Fool in the Gospel, *what shall I do? In the midst of their sufficiency they are in streights, they don't know what*

to do, which is the worst Condition that any can be reduced to; and yet they too often *overvalue* themselves, and delight themselves because of their Encrease; they make Gold

Prov. 10. *their Confidence, as the rich Mans Wealth is his*
 15. *strong City, and the loss of their Substance sinks them into the greatest Sorrow and Distress, 'tis to them as Temporal Damnation: 'Tis strange there should be such Persons, if we consider that the World is not a proper Boundary for an Immortal Soul, either as to its Natural or Spiritual Capacity, for there is nothing in it fully suitable and satisfying; the World did never yet satisfy one Soul: Adam was not easy in Paradise, tho' the Creatures obey'd him, he wanted a Meet-help, and surely his Posterity will not be satisfy'd with the Bryers and Thorns of the Wilderness. Let our State be never so comfortable, there will be still something wanting, our Expectation*

Ecl. 1. 8. *may be large, and Hopes great; but all that cometh is Vanity, all that is past and present is Vanhity and Vexation, and there is nothing to come, but is as vain as what is past. Persons in (a) a Fog apprehend that at a distance 'tis more Solid and Substantial, and when they reach that Place, the Mist is as thin as ever, and yet the Experience of all do's scarce convince any; but Persons from Generation to Generation, do give the World what it do's not deserve, their Hearts; and expect from the World what it will never give, Satisfaction. This is strange Infatuation, a Stone do's not*

(a) Mr. Norris.

hang in the Air, but tends to its Centre; and yet Man, the weight of whose Nature presses him down to a never failing Centre, stops short in a yielding Medium, takes up with the slender stays of Vanity, and leans and rests on a meer Bubble and Shadow; he does not consider the shortness of his Time, the uncertainty of Worldly Things, the certainty of Death, the Immortality of the Soul, the Awfulness of a Final Account, and the Momentous Concerns of eternal World; but *he minds Earthly Things*, walks in a vain shew, and is *Phil. 3. 19.* *disquieted in vain*; he prefers his Secular Inter-*Ps. 39. 6.* rest above all Things, he will *forfeit any Good*, and *undergo any Evil* to promote it; he will *spare no Pains*, and *lose no Time*, and let *slip no Advantage* to encrease his Stock: He finds the things of Sense are present, and suitable to his Bodily Occasions, and therefore he is intent on the getting and securing of them; and herein he thinks himself *wise*; but the Judgment of God is quite contrary, the Mouth of the Eternal One pronounces him a *Fool*, as a Sinner, and as a covetous Sinner: As a *Sinner*, for such a one (as it seems the Fool in the Gospel was) is unthankful to God, uncharitable to Man, forgetful of himself, as a dying accountable Creature, and expects that from the Earth, which God only can give, when he *bids his Soul take its ease*: Such a *Lu. 12. 19.* one is a Fool indeed, to expose himself to the contempt of wise Men, the hatred of Fellow-Creatures, the Censures of Posterity, the Displeasure of the Deity, and the Terrors of Eternal Damnation, for the sake of a little *part of the dust* of the Earth, that can no more satisfy, than

than it can sanctify. This is folly indeed, to take more care about a thing, than it can make amends for, to flatter one's self with the hope of securing what is most uncertain, to expect that from a thing which it will never give, to ruin or lose a greater thing for the sake of a lesser ; and this is the case of such Sinners : The folly of such is peculiarly aggravated ; for 'tis a folly that prevents *the greatest Concern*, 'tis that which will *never be cured*, 'tis that which God *will not pity*, nor pardon in another World, and 'tis that which we shall be for ever *ashamed of* in the Eternal State, and that will add to our Everlasting Torment ; surely such should be ashamed of it now, to expect *Delight* from that which can scarce give *any Entertainment*. There is a peculiar Mystery in this horrid Delusion, for these Worldly Persons generally do *desire what they don't want*, and don't enjoy what they *already have* ; for Men are generally most Covetous, when they have *most Wealth*, and *least Time* ; the *Rich* and *Aged* are most addicted to this Vice, the one do's not *want* what he desires, and the other *can't enjoy* it : And what an unspeakable instance of Distraction is this ! to torment *our selves* by *impatient Desires*, *eager Pursuits*, *disquieting Fears*, and *distressing Cares* about what we don't want, and what we are sure we can't long enjoy, what we may not possess one Day, nor allow our selves to take pleasure in one Moment, as the desire of more will always prevent present Enjoyment. Our Redeemer discovers his incomparable Wisdom and Goodness, in commanding us not to look to the things that *are seen*, for they

they vanish in a Moment, and so can't deserve our *fixed Eye*; not to take an *anxious Thought for to Morrow*, because we are not sure to live a Moment, and this *Night the Soul may be required*; not to set our Hearts on that *which is not*, for Disappointment must always disquiet; and to be *without carefulness*, for this can do no good, but may do much hurt; our Thought can't alter the Course of Nature, nor the Methods of Providence, and therefore it must be in vain. He declares that our anxious thoughtfulness is *foolish*, because *needless*, as we can't *add one Cubit to our Stature*, Verf. 6. *as the Sparrows are not forgotten*, and as our Verf. 25. *Heavenly Father knows what we stand in need of*; Verf. 30. as 'tis *needless*, so 'tis *fruitless*, it will not with all supposable Gain, prevent diseases of Body, disquiets of Mind, despair of Soul, decays of the Constitution, the approaches of Death, and the agonies of the Damned; and what Fruit is there then from all our Anxiety, when we can't by it get *one single Penny*, but may by it lose an Immortal Soul: As it is *Fruitless*, so our Blessed Lord has told us it is *Heathenish*, for *after these things do the Nations of the World seek*, they who have no *Promise* to encourage them to cast their Care on him, and therefore may be excused if they take more *Care themselves*; but alas, Heathens do instruct and condemn Christians, by living from Day to Day with less Solicitude and Distrust than most Professors, who tho' they are directed only to pray for their *Daily Bread*, do project and pursue their Worldly encrease, as if they were sure to live *here for ever*: But do's not the prescribed Prayer of
Christ

Christ expose and condemn the Practice of Christians? And to say no more in this Point, this anxious Thoughtfulness is not only Heathenish, but *worse th n Brutish*; for the *Ravens* do neither Sow nor Reap, neither have Store-House nor Barn, and yet God feedeth them. How Ignominious a Character then must this be, for a Person whose very Profession obliges him to seek the *Things th t are above*, where he must or may live for ever, without any Need or Profit, to act below a Pagan, and a Brute, in providing for a *dying Body*, and an *uncertain to Morrow*, when thereby the Concerns of an Immortal Soul are continually neglected: But alas this is common, and hereby the Word becomes *the Savour of Death*. The love of the World do's often hinder our *attending* on the Word, and it often hinders our *attending to it*; as our Hearts go after their Covetousness, and our Thoughts with the Fools Eyes, are at the ends of the beloved Earth.

When our Blessed Lord himself was preaching to a great Multitude, upon most Important Subjects, he was interrupted by the sudden Request of one of the Company, who was more concerned about his Body, than his Soul; the Request was, that *Christ would speak to his Brother to divide the Inheritance*; nothing could be more suitable to the Discourse of Christ; out of the abundance of the Heart the Mouth spoke; though our Redeemer spoke as never Man spake, yet he did not engage the *Ear and Heart* of this Worldly Pretender; *half an Inheritance* on Earth was in his Eye more tempting than the *whole Inheritance* of the Saints above; his Mind was on Earthly Things,

Vers. 24.

Luke 12.
13, 14.

Things, and therefore the most Heavenly Eloquence did not affect him. Worms must feed on Dust, the Glory of the Upper Heavens is but a Shade and Darkness to them. Our Redeemer intent on the Salvation of Immortal Souls, would not suffer himself to be long interrupted, but with great Wisdom gives a short and sharp Answer, *he said to him, Man, who made me a Judge and a Divider over you? His Kingdom was not of this World*; so that more was not necessary, than for our Blessed Lord in compassion to the Soul, to take occasion from this Request, to warn the Auditory against Covetousness, which he did, *Verf. 15. beware and take heed of Covetousness*; the caution he doubles, to signify both the great guilt and danger of that Sin, in preventing the Success of the Word: The Question as to its civil Concern was to be consider'd, and decided by a publick Court of Judicature, the *Bench of the Triumviri*, where were Judges, and some were chosen as *(a) Arbiters and Dividers*, so that it was fit for Christ, considering his State and Circumstance, not to interpose, whose *Hour was not yet come*; though he had Right, *Joh. 2. 4.* yet he saw no reason to gratify a *Worldly Desire*: When he was requested to direct a Soul in a Spiritual Concern, he gave a speedy, suitable, sufficient, and direct Answer; as when the young Man askt him *what he should do to be saved*, he bids him *keep the Commandments*; *Matth. 19. 16.* when he was desired to heal the Sick, he of- *Verf. 17.* ten cured the most painful and dangerous Di-

(a) See Dr. Lightfoot, *Analys. mensur.*

stempers, and that sometimes without being askt : But as to the *Estates of any*, he lookt upon it as a thing *too mean* for him to speak *one Word* about; tho' he raised the Dead, he never enricht the Living, well knowing that the World would hinder the Word, and no question but 'tis the Great Obstacle to a successful Ministry in all Ages; the design of the Word is to *convert the Simple*, and the love of the World hinders that Conversion: when the young Man was told by our Blessed Lord, that *he*

Luk.18.23. *must sell what he had, he went away sorrowful:* When the Invitation was given to the great Supper, the World endited the Excuses;

Luk.14.18. 'twas *lawful Things*, the price of Ground, the yoke of Oxen, and the Wife, hinder'd due Attendance. 'Tis very remarkable, tho' the vilest Sinners, as Murderers, Adulterers, Blasphemers, have been converted by the Word; we have not one *Instance* of a covetous Person that proved a true Convert: *Zacheus* indeed was Rich, and he sought to see Jesus;

Lu.19.12. but if the love of the World had prevailed, it had soon blinded his Eyes, and stay'd his Motion; for to use the Words of Christ himself,

Matth 19.23. *a rich Man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*, his Conversion is less likely than others; but if such are converted as to an External Profession, the World prevents Encrease and Progress; the Word is sown among Thorns, and the *cares of the World*, and

Matth 13.22. *deceitfulness of Riches choke the Word*; they hinder close Attention, and lively Affection, and by degrees the World promotes Apostacy; for

Vers. 21. *when Tribulation and Persecution arises b cause of the Word*, such Persons are soon offended, and
with

with Demas forsake their Lord, and then they fall into many Temptations, and Snares, and hurtful Lusts, that drown Men in Destruction and Perdition, and then the Word becomes to them the Savour of Death: Beware therefore of this World, if you love your Souls, if you value your Salvation: Don't think that your true Happiness do's consist in the abundance of the things of this Life, if you do, you differ widely from the Infalible Judgment of Christ; Persons may be better without them, and are often the worse by them; 'tis a greater Happiness not to want these Things than to have them. Colours are not suitable to the Ear, nor Sounds to the Eye, nor the World to the Soul, it will never give true and full Content. Could the Sun and Stars divest themselves of their Glory, and give it to us, should all the crowned Heads in the World lay their Crowns at our Feet, or could we by our own Care and Contrivance, get the Possession of the whole World, and procure a Lease longer than that of Methuselah's to enjoy it in, it would be as nothing without God, but as Hagar's Bottle without Water, or a Paradise without a Tree of Life: Don't therefore think this World deserves thy Love, for Vanity will beget Disappointment, and Disappointment breed Vexation. Your Manna (when not in the Ark) will putrify, and your Oar corrupt and melt away, and not make amends for Digging, but at length make you Miserable (a), whatever you get you can't keep; when you have run the Race, and

(a) Dammati ad Metalia were very miserable.

gained the Crown, 'tis but a *Leafy one*, a Corruptible one, it will leave you, and you must leave it : Don't think as some are tempted to do, that the encrease of your Worldly Substance, is an Evidence of God's special Love to you ; for there is *one event to the Wicked, and*
 Eccl. 9. 2. *to the Righteous, and there is no knowing the love of God by what is before us.* Haman thought
 Esther 5. *Esthers* inviting him to a Banquet, and admitting none but himself, was a Mark of special Favour ; but he was mistaken. Prosperity may be a Preface to Destruction ; at best the encrease of the World do's neither alter our *shadow without*, which is still of the same size, nor our *valuable Substance within*, we are neither greater nor better by them in the Eye of God ; you may have the Golden Cup (a), and yet want the Kiss of Special Favour ; that can never be a sign of the Love of God, that is prohibited thy own Love ; and 'tis certain, if the Things of the World are in *our Hands*, we must keep them from *our Hearts*, or else we are guilty of *Idolatry and Adultery*, though we may call it Good-Husbandry and Frugality ; such a Love is inconsistent with the Love of God, God must have the Throne, or we have *no part in him*. When our Lord was crucify'd, the World was under an Eclipse, and if we are crucify'd with him, its Glory will be under a shade to us. Let not therefore the Things of the World be the matter of our Inordinate Desire, a little is *as much as we need*, as Pilgrims and Strangers, and more than

Jam. 4. 4.

(a) Story of Cyrus.

we do deserve : Let Competency, and not Superfluity, *things convenient for us*, be our Request with *Agur* ; let not distracting Care about these passing Objects be our Sin and Torment ; if we do our Duty, God will take the Burden ; let present Duty always prepare for future Events ; and to say no more, let not the Possession and Enjoyment of Worldly Goods, be matter to us of Inordinate Joy ; you should not rejoice much, in what you cannot rejoice long, let not the denial or removal of them, be matter of excessive Sorrow ; if a little is left it is enough, more might be a Snare. If God be yours, lose what you will you have still all, and without him all will be worse than nothing, it will deceive you now, and destroy you for ever ; in all changes and turns of Life, if the Gospel is the Savour of Life to you, you will love his Word more than all this World : without this there can be no true Religion (a). A Religious Covetous Man, are terms that imply a Contradiction ; that Man can never be accounted Religious that loves neither God nor his Neighbour : But the Worldly Man, neither doth the one nor the other ; his Neighbour he do's not love, for if he did, they would find some fruits of it ; but he only says to a Brother and Sister that is *naked, and destitute of daily Food, depart in peace, be ye warmed and fill'd, when notwithstanding he gives them not those things that are needful for the Body* : and as for the love of God, the Apostle hath put it out of all doubt, that he has

Jam. 2. 14

(a) See A. B. Sharps 4th Sermon.

1 Joh. 3. no such thing in him ; who *so hath this Worlds*
 17, 20. *Goods, and seeth his Brother hath need, and shut-*
 teth up his Bowels of Compassion from him, how
 Jam. 2 26. *dwelleth the love of God in him ; for he that lov-*
 Gal. 5. 6. *eth not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can*
he love God whom he hath not seen ? Nothing can
be more express and positive ; besides 'tis
most absur'd to think that Man Religious,
that wants the two main Qualifications,
that go to the making up a Disciple of
Christ, (viz.) Faith and Repentance ; but the
Worldly Man, he that is not rich in good
Works, has neither ; not Faith, for that must
work by Charity, and without Works is dead :
nor Repentance ; for when John the Baptist
 Luke 3. *preached Repentance, the People askt him, saying,*
 10, 11. *what shall we do ? that is, how they should ex-*
press their Repentance ; his Answer was this,
He that hath two Coats, let him impart to him that
hath none, and he that hath Meat let him do like-
wise ; and surely he can't be a Religious Man,
who is put in the black List of Damnati-
on : now we never find the Prophets or Apo-
stles giving a List of these black Crimes, that
will involve all that are guilty of them in
inevitable Destruction, but we are sure to
meet with Covetousness with all its Atten-
dants. This is the Person whom the Lord abhors,
this Sin is so very great and odious, tho' so
very common, that the Great God in the final
Sentence that he shall pass upon wicked Men
to their condemnation at the last Day, seems
 Match. 25. *to take no notice of the other Sins and Crimes*
 31. *of Life, but only this ; there is no mention*
made of Fraud and Oppression, Unbelief
and Irreligion, Lewdness and Debauchery,
tho'

tho' any of these be enough to damn a Man : but merely *not doing good*, their not relieving the Neceffitous, and exercising other Acts of Charity when it was in their Power : So that to such the Word must be the *Savour of Death unto Death*.

9. *Habitual Sensuality,*

Is one Cause of the Word's being *the Savour of Death*. Some Persons that are not Covetous are *Sensual* ; their Belly is the God to which they sacrifice more than would serve many of their betters, tho' the Idol will rot ; and they are still providing Fuel for the unhallow'd Fire. 'Tis very strange to thinking Persons to see many who write themselves *Men*, at the greatest expence of Thought, Time, Pains, and Money, gratifying a Body that is every moment wearing down to a Grave, and in a very little while will be a ghastly Spectacle to the Eye, and a Lump of Corruption, most offensive to the Nostril. 'Tis strange that the most noble part should be a Slave to the ignoble part, the Soul to the Body ; and that all the World should be put under Contributions to serve the Taste, the Touch, the Sight, the Scent, and the Ear of a little piece of organiz'd Clay : And yet how common is it for Persons *to walk after the Flesh* ? Lust and Appetite command their Powers and Purfes, they savour only the things of the Flesh, they have no Palate for spiritual and heavenly Objects, nothing but Flesh does relish with them, they are swallow'd up in Sense ; continually sowing to the Flesh by Rioting and Drunkenness, Chambering and Wanton-

ness, not considering that *of that Flesh* they must resp Corruption. The Brute does often ride the
 Gal. 6. 8. Man, and the Sot banish the Saint; so that both Humanity and Christianity are lost in the Dish, the Cup, and the Game. One single Lust shall make all that is great and good bow before it. How many young Persons take their Degrees in this School of Iniquity, till Wine and Women have taken away both the Head and Heart? Is not this an Age of the most degenerate Pride and Sensuality, infamous for the most brutal Gratifications, and devilish Ambition? Strange Stories we have in the Roman History of the Extravagancies of some, whose Death was as shameful as their Life was inglorious; many millions of our Money consumed in one Feast and Triumph, and the most valuable Treasure melted down in the Flame of Lust. But their Ignorance may serve in some degree for an Excuse. But how abominable are the expensive Entertainments, if not Debauches, on some under a Dispensation of the brightest Light, and greatest Purity. This is too often the Corruption of Youth, and the Scandal of Old Age; hereby Gluttony, Drunkenness, and Uncleanneſs ride in Triumph, and dare every
 2 Tim 3 4. thing that is sacred. As Persons are *Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God*, the Colour of the Wine, the Heat of an Amour, the Diversifement of a Game, the Jest of a merry Companion, the Furniture of a Table, and the Laughter of a Fool, are the highest Gratifications, and the nobleſt Entertainments of some; whereby the Love of God is despised, and his Word neglected. 'Tis certain, the great
 God

God does not only allow us Conveniences, but Comforts ; Neccessaries, but Delights ; and all Diversion is not forbidden by him ; we have a merciful Grant from him, as we are not to *hate our own Flesh, but to love it and cherish it*, to refresh and divert our selves in the Business and Burthen of Life, that we may serve him with more Chearfulness, and act for him with more Vigour : But surely our Repasts and Recreations must not trespass on his Right, intrench on his Prerogative, shade his Glory, and cast Contempt on his Word. *Solo-* Eccles. 2.
mon tells us, *There is nothing better than for a Man* 24. 6. 1, 2.
to rejoice, that is to eat and drink, and enjoy the Good of his Labour ; and it was a great Evil that he saw under the Sun, that a Man to whom God had given Riches, and Wealth, and Honour, so that he wanted nothing for his Soul of all that he desired, yet he had not power to eat thereof ; but then he adds, that he that rejoiceth must do good. There is nothing better than for a Man so to rejoice as to do good to himself and to others, for the Glory of his great Benefactor. And this is a just Regulation of sensual Pleasure ; That which enclines and enables to do good to our selves or others, is praise-worthy ; and so the Jews were order'd by God to meet three times every year at Jerusalem, to feast and to rejoice before the Lord ; and the Primitive Chistians, for near two hundred years after our Saviour, had their Agapæ, their Feasts of Love, to enjoy each other at, till Sense swallowed up Seriousness, Rom. 13.
by making Provision for the Flesh to fulfil the Lusts 14.
thereof. Our blessed Lord himself turned Water into Wine at a Wedding, that some might drink, but not that any might be drunk ; the

Plenty of the Wine did not hinder the Purity of the Heart ; and if we desire or expect the Word of God to do us good, we must watch the Senses, and guard against all Excess. We must not divert our selves in *that Time* that God has made *sacred* by appropriating it to himself ; we must not let any thing that is in *its Nature* or *Circumstance* sinful, be the *Matter* or *Occasion* of our sensual Gratification ; we must not propose *wrong Ends*, as the fulfilling our Lusts ; we must not proceed to *forbidden* or *doubtful Degrees* of Self-indulgences ; and we must be very cautious, lest what is *lawful* in it-self, becomes *unlawful* by its sinful Effects and Consequences ; that our Repasts and Diversions may not intoxicate and inflame, enrage or emasculate, render the Mind light and unserious, feathery and vain, the Heart stupid and secure, the Habit of the Soul carnal, and the general Course of Life self-indulging ; that it does not keep from Duty, and tempt to Sin, by turning the very *Byas* of the Spirit from God to the Creature. This will discover

a Cor. 6. a great Degeneracy of Mind, as some are sensual,
 10. not having the Spirit, who serve divers Lusts and
 Titus 3.3. Pleasures ; it will appear to be a Course *con-*
trary to the whole of *Practical Christianity*, unsuitable to the Purity of God, the Humiliation of Christ, and that Poverty and Patience of Spirit that is absolutely necessary for the due Performance of many Duties : It will also give Satan a great *Advantage* over us, make us an easy Prey to his Temptations, and so dead-
 en the Mind to all spiritual Concerns, as *she*
 1 Tim. 5. *that liveth in Pleasure is dead whilst she liveth ;*
 6. whereby we shall extinguish the Love and
 Fear

Fear of God, and so be unfit for his Presence and Enjoyment for ever. This sensual voluptuous Temper, as contrary to the Purity and Spirituality of the Gospel, is the criminal Cause of neglecting or perverting the Word, whereby it becomes to them the *Savour of Death*.

10. *Secret Partiality, and Open Formality.*

Many Professors are but Pretenders ; they have the outward Sign of Religion, but they want the inward Seal, the Image of God engraven on the Heart, consisting of *Truth, Purity and Righteousness*. Many propose to themselves *wrong Ends*, in their publick Appearance in the Sanctuary of the Lord, and for want of a *right End*, will be excluded the Temple, and banish'd the Presence of God for ever. They act from Principles unworthy of a holy Religion, to please Men and profit themselves ; than which nothing is more odious in the sight of God, who *loveth Truth in the inward parts*, and declares that *a Hypocrite shall not stand before him*. The Word to such is not a *Glass*, in which they see their Faces ; but a *Veil*, by which they hide them. These Persons *have a Name to live, but are dead* ; the Word does no more affect them, than a Funeral-Sermon does the Corps that is buried. They don't design or desire to feel the Power of the sacred Word, which would transform them into a divine Likeness, change both the Brute and the Devil, as to the Sins of the Flesh and Spirit, by the vital Influence of the Holy Spirit : But as their *Hearts are not right in the sight of God*, and as their great Endeavour is to

look

look great in the sight of Men, they only use the Word as a common Pass, that they may in disguise, as religious Cheats, travel from place to place, desiring the Prayers of others, but designing their Purfes ; Gain to them is Godliness. This was the Leaven of the Pharisees,

- Mat. 15. 8. *who loved the Praise of Men more than the Praise of God, with whom Profit was Piety. Many such*
 Psal. 66. *there are in this Age, who draw nigh to God*
 18. *with their Lips, but their Hearts are far from him ;*
 Prov. 15. *they make a shining Figure in a worshiping As-*
 8. *sembly, but because they regard Iniquity in their*
 2 Tim. 3. *Hearts, their very Prayers are an Abomination to*
 5. *to the Lord. They have a (a) Form of Godliness,*
that they may gain the Favour of the Godly ;
But hereby they can't really profit themselves,
as they want a clean Heart, and a right Spirit :
They can't resemble God, in the Image of
whom consists our greatest Perfection ; they
can't serve God, for they want that Faith and
Love that are the proper Springs of all spi-
ritual Action ; they can't be accepted of God,
for they deny him their Hearts, without
which, Heads and Hands avail nothing ; and
they can never enjoy him, for he is a God of
Truth, and can't admit those, who love and
make Lies their refuge, into his glorious Pre-
sence. Without (internal) Holiness none can see
his Face ; so that whatever they may gain for
a time, 'tis certain they must lose their Souls
and their God for ever : The Word to such can
never be Life ; for they are dead in Law, and
dead in Sin. Their wilful Hypocrisy, as con-

(a) *Mozzoois, its Picture, or Shape.*

tinued in, does constantly oppose the sacred Design of the Gospel, which is nothing less than their Sanctification here, and Salvation hereafter. And yet alas! how many content themselves with a *Notional Religion*? whereby they can with Art and Air recommend it to others, can talk of it with a Set of Words, and yet are no more affected themselves, than the *Chimes* are, when set and moved to the Tune of a Psalm. How many do glory in an *outward Conformity*, and *make a fair shew in the Flesh*, who do not look to the *hidden Man of the Heart*? They'll paint the Face, but never feel the Pulse; look big on the Stage, (as a *Hypocrite* is but a Stage-player) tho' they are little in their own Eyes, and as nothing in the Eye of God. They will abstain, perhaps, from the grosser Acts of Sin, but Pride, Lust, and Revenge shall reign within. How many are *scrupulous* about lesser matters of Religion, and yet are negligent about the great Concerns of the Gospel? pretend to a wonderful Tenderness of Conscience, and yet forget both Justice and Mercy. The *Jews* prefer'd Rituals before Morals, Sacrifice before Mercy, Human Customs before the Divine Commands; the Pharisees were exact in observing Vows, and yet were so inhuman as not to relieve their very Parents, pretending that what they had was a *Gift*; their Vow was a Cloke for their Covetousness. And thus many are *very strict* in little things, as Mint, Annise, and Cummin, and *very loose* in the great things of the Law: They will be sure to differ from Man, as more holy than he; and at the same time differ from God too, in being less holy than they ought.

And

Gal. 6. 12.

Matth. 15.

Matth. 23
14.

And are there not many that will perform Actions *materially good*, for the *worst of Purposes*; give Alms to be seen of Men, make long Prayers for a Pretence, be gravely formal and singular, to fix Observation, and raise Reputation! All this is but a *Form of Godliness*, which prevents the Power of the Gospel. If Religion does not *change* the Heart, and *regulate* the Life, if it does not *dispose* us to act for spiritual Ends, to have a *conscientious* Regard to all the Commands of God, the difficult as well as easy, it is but *vain*. The Word will at length discover such, tho' 'tis despised by such. The Stories of Gehazi, *Jeroboam's* Wife, *Ananias* and *Sapphira*, if consider'd, are terrible enough to make them *afraid*. It will one day be said to such to their eternal Shame and Sorrow, *Why feignest thou thy self to be another?* The Paint will last but a little while, the Mask will wear out, and then the Pretender is exposed as a Spectacle of Contempt to *both Worlds* at once, to his everlasting Confusion and Amazement. Let none therefore, by Partiality and Formality, use Religion as they do their Cloaths; they are convenient, and therefore we wear them; and for the particular Form or Mode of them, we follow the Custom of the Country where we live: And as the Cloaths we wear do not alter the Complexion or Features of our Body; so neither does our Religion affect the *Temper* of our Souls. The finery of the Garb, and niceness of the Dress, don't ease the pained Body, cure the distempered Constitution; no more does our Religion, as 'tis an external Profession, rectify the Disorders of the Mind. This will
never

never compensate our Pains : Whatever secular Advantage some for a time may reap, we shall at length be served as those that work in *rich Mines*, who are daily employ'd about Gold and Silver, with great Toil and Labour, but after all are but little the richer for all the Treasures that come into their hands.

II. *Indulged Sloth.*

Some are not merely Formal, but very *Slothful*; and their Sloth is the Cause of their Ruin. We read the slothful Servant was condemned. *Matth.* Non-improvement is destructive as well as *25. 30.* Mismanagement. *Not doing well* will damn as certainly as *doing ill*; as a negative Righteousness will not save, so negative Unrighteousness will destroy: *He that knows but does not Luke 12.* his Master's Will, is to be beaten with many stripes. *47.* Sins of Omission are only mentioned in the awful account that is given us in Scripture of the procedure of the Final Judgment: not that other Sins are *excluded*, tho' not *express'd*; but these are represented as the criminal Cause of Misery, because the least considered by any, either *Jew* or *Gentile*, who are ready to think all is well, if they don't *do ill*, though they don't *do good*; they believe they shall be saved, only because they don't *do hurt*; therefore do's the Judge of all to prevent our Mistake and Miscarriage, put a *particular mark* on Omissions, that we may make *our Remark*, that not to obey, is to disobey. We wrong both God, our selves, and others by Negligence, as well as by Licentiousness; we must not *only cease from doing Evil,*

Isa. 1. 16. *Evil, but must learn to do well; we must not be*
 17. *slothful in Business, but fervent in Spirit, serving*
 Rom. 12. *the Lord; we must exercise our selves to Godliness,*
 11. *abound in the work of the Lord, working out our*
 1 Tim. 4. 7. *own Salvation with Fear and Trembling, and give*
 1 Cor. 15. *all diligence by Running, Fighting, Wrestling, La-*
 58. *bouring, to make our Calling and Election sure; con-*
 Phil. 2. 12. *sidering, that narrow is the Way, and streight is the*
 2 Pet. 1. 10. *Gate, so that we must not only seek, but strive,*
 Mat. 7. 14. *for many shall seek to enter, but shall not be able.*
 Lu. 13. 24. *Without serious Consideration, firm Resoluti-*
 on, wakeful Circumspection, and warm Ap-
 plication, Salvation is not to be expected.
 God will not *do all* for us, if we don't under the
 influence of his Grace, do what *we can* for him.
 In the best Persons there is to be found too
 great a degree of Sloth and Oiscitancy, they
 don't take Heaven with that *Holy Violence*, as
 an Eternal Weight of Glory do's deserve; they
 may complain often of wandring Eyes, and
 folded Arms, of great remisness and deadness
 in Duty; they have many stops and pauses,
 which sometimes occasion shameful Falls and
 Declensions; they don't by Meditation, Sup-
 plication, and Self-excitation, stir up them-
 selves to *take hold of God*; they don't by vi-
 If. 64. 7. *gorous Pursuits, strive to apprehend that for*
 Phil. 3. 12. *which they were apprehended of Christ, which was*
 nothing less than perfect Conformity to his
 Life and Death: They don't expostulate with
 their Souls, so as to raise their Spirits, and
 excite their active Powers for the glory of
 God, the credit of Religion, the good of o-
 thers, their own growing Peace, and more as-
 sured hope of the Promised, Glorious Re-
 ward, though they are strictly commanded
 not

not to rest satisfy'd in any present Attain-Phil. 3. 13.
 ment ; but with the great Apostle to press for-
 ward towards the Mark of the Prize of the High
 Calling of God in Christ Jesus, and not to be
 slothful, but to be followers of those, who thro' Ver. 14.
 Faith and Patience do inherit the Promises. This Heb. 6. 12
 they should do, agreeably to their near Re-
 lation, strict Obligation, and high Expectati-
 on ; the End proposed is attainable, the Means
 appointed in their use, are most apt to answer
 their End ; and all good Men may be assured,
 that in the diligent constant use of Means,
 they shall attain the End ; they have fair Op-
 portunities for it by outward Light, and in-
 ward Influence ; they have no greater inward
 Indispositions than others to discourage them,
 nor are likely to meet with greater Exter-
 nal Difficulties, than the Primitive Christians Heb. 11.
 met with to dishearten and disappoint them ; 35.
 if they faint, they have the same quickning
 assisting Spirit of Grace to apply to ; and if
 they fail, they have the same precious Blood
 of sprinkling to trust in, which cleanseth from 1 Joh. 1. 7.
 all Sin ; and that they may not fail, they have
 the bright Examples of many that are now in
 Glory to direct and encourage them, and as
 great a Reward promised and secured, to en-
 liven their Hope, and quicken their Endea-
 vours ; such therefore are inexcusable, if by
 a patient continuance in well-doing, they don't seek Rom. 2. 7.
 Glory, Honour, and Immortality, till they actual-
 ly attain Eternal Life. Though they can't
 do any thing in their own Strength, nor me-
 rit any thing by what they do in the strength
 of another, yet it most highly becomes them
 not to sleep as others do, but guard against every 1 Thess. 5.
 thing 6.

thing *that will promote Sloth* ; as *Unthoughtfulness* of the Work and Reward ; *Distrust* as to Success ; *Pride*, as to any past Performances, and present Attainments ; *Carnality* that feeds the Flesh, and fastens to the Earth ; *Worldly Hurries*, that prevent both Inclination and Opportunity to do much for God and the Soul. And they should also *consult what will promote their Activity*, as a *due Sense* of the Divine Authority and Benignity, the greatness of the promised Reward, the reasonableness of the Work, the Difficulty that do's, and the Pleasure that may attend it ; the ready assistance of Divine Grace, the possibility of Miscarrying ; after all ; the endearments of their Master for whom they work ; the Eye of their Master that is on them ; the Tribunal that is before them ; the Deceiver that is near them ; and the observing World that is round about them. Such Considerations as these, should make them often put the Question, *what do I more than*

Mat. 5. 47. *others* ? Who have received but little, and cannot expect much. These should often expostulate with themselves, can I do no more for my Saviour, and my Soul, when the one dyed for me, and the other by his Death is to live for ever ? Can I do no more, when I have done so little ? Can I do no more, when I can't well do too much ? Can I do no more, when I may this Day be doing my last ? Can I do no more, when so many others do nothing for the Glory of my Redeemer ? Can I do no more, when others do so much for a Shadow and Bubble ? They strive for a Corruptible, but I for an Incorruptible Crown : Can I do no more, when the more I do, the more

more I shall receive? The more I do, the less shall I expose my self to *Temporal Judgments*, to the *Forfeiture* of the Divine Favour, to the *Temptation* of the Devil, and to the *bitterness* of Death; by holy Diligence I am most likely to enjoy continued Peace living and dying, and am to receive a greater Reward for ever, for as *a Man sows, so shall he reap*. Such Questions as these will prevent the Disciples sleeping, when their Master for an Hour leaves them, and enable them to watch *one Hour* more. The wise Virgins, as well as the foolish, slumber'd and slept for want of due Consideration; 'tis for want of frequent Self-expostulation, that such don't *trim their Lamps*, and get ready to *meet* their Lord. The cry of every good Man should be like that of the Church, *I sleep, but my Heart waketh*, and Cant. 5.2. his endeavour should be to keep the Eye open, as well as the Heart sensible. Herein the Righteous differ from the Wicked, whose *Habitual Sloth* hinders the success of the Gospel; they don't take pains to inform themselves, they don't either attend on, or attend to the Word: their Eyes close, and their Ears are stop't in the House of God, and so the glory of God's House is all Shade and Darkness to the *slumbering Eye*, and the Terrors or Comforts of the Voice of God don't affect the *stopped Ear*! If they do attend, they will not be at any pains to apply the Word to themselves; and so for want of a diligent Hand, which is attended with the Blessing of God, they are not Rich, but starve in the midst of Spiritual Plenty: They don't plough up the Ground, and so the Seed of the Word do's not take Root, Mat. 13 6.

but withers away ; the Seed of the Sower for want of Pains, do's not become Food for the Eater, and so do's not bring forth the Harvest of Life and Glory. How common, and how shameful is this, for Persons to be painful in sowing for a perishing Body, and careless about the Seed, that affords the Spiritual Meat, that endureth to Eternal Life ? Such lose their Souls, because they don't love them, for if they did, they would be diligent about that *Provision*, without which they must perish for ever.

12. Daring Prophaneness.

Some Persons are not only Slothful, but Impious, *Despisers* of that which is good ; they *sit in the Seat of the Scornful*, and make a *mock of Sin* : They jest with that cursed thing that embitter'd the Earth, and inflamed Hell, that dared the Majesty of Heaven, attempted the Throne of his Glory, and emptyed Heaven of some of its bright Inhabitants, and turned them into despairing Devils : So great is the Impudence of some Sinners, that they prophane the Name of God, when *dreadful is his Name* ; against him they *make a wide Mouth, and draw out the Tongue* ; by suddain Exclamations, rash Oaths, horrid Curses, *they take his Name in vain* ; this is so common, that *because of Swearing our Land mourneth*, though little or no Pleasure, Profit, or Credit can be a Temptation to this, if compared with many other Sins. Impudent Sinners on the least Occasion and Provocation, will thus affront the Majesty of the most High, Curse God, and Damn themselves

selves in a Moment, as if their Judge slept, and their Damnation linger'd. The *Jews* tore their Garments when they heard the Name of God Blasphemed; many (a) wise as well as serious Persons, have thought fit to uncover when they mentioned, or heard mentioned the Name of the Deity: But how dreadful is the Custom of many, who cannot only patiently hear it, but artfully excuse it; strange indeed, that the Maker of Heaven and Earth, the *high and lofty One that inhabits* Is. 57. 15. *Eternity, who only killeth and maketh alive,* on 1 Sam. 2. 6. whose Breath we live every Moment, and by whom we must be judged for an Eternity, should be so little and contemptible in the Eyes of trifling Mortals, when he is the Admiration of Angels, the Terror of Devils, and the Stay of all Things? Strange indeed, that he that is but a little breathing Dust, as a single dust of a Balance, and drop of a Bucket, should challenge Omnipotence, and prophanely (b) touch the Altar, when the Fire thereof in a Moment may consume them as a Sacrifice to Eternal Vengeance. Whatever Excuses such impious Wretches may make, as that they *can't help it*, they are *provoked to it*, they *can't be believed without it*, they *mean no hurt by it*, they *have more Respect among Inferi-ors for it*, and *can't look big without it*, and therefore their *Mouth is full of Cursing*; they Ps. 10. 7.

(a) Mr. Boyle. Mr. Herbert when he mentioned the Name of Christ, always added, My Master.

(b) The Jews in Solomon's Time, when they swore touched the Altar, which Ceremony was used among many of the Heathens.

Ps. 109.
17. 18.

will find in a little while, that an angry God will cloth *himself with Vengeance*, and curse them to an Eternal Hell: He will say as in the *Psalmist*; as he loved Cursing, so let it come unto him; as he delighteth not in Blessing, so let it be far from him; as he clothed himself with Cursing, as with a Garment, so let it come into his Bowels like Water, and like Oil into his Bones. Some do not only prophane the Name of God, but the *Providences of God*, by *Basphemous Discontent*, Rage and Despair; the *Ordinances of God* by contemptuous Neglects, and Irreverent Demeanours; the *Word of God* by trifling and jesting with the Book of Life, the concern of an Eternity; the *Sabbaths of God* by needless Business, Visits and Diversions; the *Servants of God* by harsh Censures, vile Reproaches, abusive Scoffs; the *Proud have them*, as they had *David*, in *Derision*, and the Saviour of the World too, with all his *Prophets* before him, and *Apostles* after him. This base treatment is to be despised, because the dispraise and disgrace of the Wicked, is a real (a) Commendation; but the guilt of such Wretches is to be lamented with Floods of Tears; that what is most Excellent, Venerable, Amiable, and Useful, should be render'd vile in the Eye of the World, by prophane Jest, and impious Scoffs. Such Persons surely are far from the Kingdom of God; not meerly *one thing*, but many things are wanting to render the Word to such the Saviour of Life; all the Judgments written in the Book of God, are the Por-

Ps. 119. 51.

(a) Malis displicere, Laudari est, Sen.

tion of their Cup ; how contemptible soever the Deity may be in their Eye, they will in a little while find that with *him is terrible* Job 37 22. *Majesty*, when he shall pour out the Vials of his Wrath upon them, make them wither away as Grass, and trample on them as Chaff on a Dunghil. Tho' a God in Christ is to every Serious, Penitent, Believing Soul, *rich in Mercy*, of *tender Bowels*, ready to Direct, Assist, Succour, Refresh and Pardon those that love him ; yet to impenitent, obstinate Sinners, he is a *consuming Fire*, his Name is *Dreadful* ; as his Justice, his Holiness, his Omniscience, Omnipotence and Eternity, are Perfections *big with Terror*, engaged against such Sinners. Were their Eyes open to consider how the Almighty *hates* all Sin, *observes* the least Sin, is *able to* punish every Sin, that he will certainly *avenge* himself on all his Implacable Enemies, by inexpressible, inconceivable Torments, and that he *lives for ever* to display the Glory of his Power and Justice in their Everlasting Misery ; surely they would tremble to think, that *they must one Day fall into the Hands of the Living God* ; the declared Vengeance of all Mortals is but as painted Fire, if compared with the Vengeance of a Jealous God, who in a Moment can destroy *both Soul* Matth. 10. *and Body*, and cast them into Hell : think on this 28. *all ye that forget God, lest he tare you in pieces*, Ps. 50. 22. *and there be none to deliver you* ; he surely is to be feared, for *who can stand in his sight, when once he* Ps. 75. 7. *is Angry*. As his Perfections are terrible to Sinners, so are his Providences ; for he has appeared against such with the Voice of Vengeance, and Arm of Power, to their sudden A-

mazement and Confusion ; some (a) single Sinners he has *markt out*, as *Cain*, and made their *Punishment* in their own Confession, greater than *they could bear* ; Some Families because of their Crying Sins, he has driven away as Dust in the Whirl-wind ; yea, a sinful Nation as that of the *Jews*, he has utterly destroy'd, that others might *bear and fear*, and do no more so presumptuously, but know him by the Judgments that he executed ; and should not Sinners then stand in awe, and Sin not, especially if they further consider how terrible God is in his Threatnings, as to Body and Soul, Time and Eternity, he will cast them into Hell, and punish them with everlasting Destruction, and who can tell the Power of his Anger ? 'Tis for want of Consideration that any dare the Almighty, and lift up themselves against him ; did they consider, they would be afraid, and not speak and act, as if with their prophane Breath, they could blast Heaven and Earth at once, and with their own Arm could shut up the Gate of Hell, and open the Gate of Heaven at pleasure. 'Tis but a few Breaths more, and the Flaming Vengeance of God will at once discover to them their Fault, and consume them with Terrors for their Folly. They may soon be distracted with the Terrors of God in a Day of Providential Visitation, when the Hand of God shall strip them of all their Comforts at once ; they may soon be made to tremble in a Day of Judicial Despair, when Conscience shall be awakened like that of

(a) Dr. Ford of the Judgments of God.

Judas, to hasten their Eternal Torment; they may soon be amazed in a *Day of Death*, when they shall see all their Vanity is past, and nothing remains but the *reserves* of Everlasting Vengeance; they may soon be shook over a Grave, stated between both Worlds, and the Prospect of the endless miserable World, shall fill their Souls with inexpressible Horror; and certain it is, that in a little while they will be a *trembling Spectacle* in the full view of Angels and Men, before the Bar of a Sin-avenging Judge, and shall be cast by him beyond Appeal and Reprieve, into the place prepared for the Devil and his Angels; as they blasphemed God on Earth, their Sin shall be their Punishment, with Devils they shall rage and blaspheme in Hell for ever. Oh inconceivable Agony! Ineffable Torment! The Word that such do now despise, shall judge them to an Eternal Death, and then they will find it to be the *Savour of Death unto Death*.—Thus I have consider'd the Criminal Causes of this Death, some others might be added, as Lust, Passion, Prejudice, Evil Company, Conformity to a vain World, &c. but these and others may be reduced to the Heads already mentioned, and are too *particular* to require a *distinct* Consideration. I would not multiply when there is no need; let every Person that has read those Lines, ask the Question, is not this my Case? If it be, I say to thee, as it was said to *Simon Magus*, Repent that the thought of thy Heart may be forgiven thee; Act. 8.22. there is Mercy for every returning Penitent Soul, don't therefore despise Sin, nor despair of a Saviour: There is *room still*, even for thy Lu. 24.22.
M 4
Soul,

Matth. 11. 28. *Soul, if it is weary and heavy laden, it may find Rest; and if it be not thy Case, blefs God for his Restraining, Sanctifying Grace, that you should be saved by the Word, when so many Millions perish under it, Adorable Grace, Distinguishing Mercy: This Love is better than Life, therefore let thy Lips praise the Lord, the Lord Redeemer, by whom only you can love for ever. Perhaps one of the Pages thou hast turned over, has spoke to thee, as Nathan did to Da-*
 2 Sam. 12. 7. *vid, thou art the Man; if it has, give not Sleep to thy Eyes, nor Slumber to thy Eye-lids, till like a dying Man, thou hast implored both Pardon*
 James 4. 3. *and Purity. Ask, and you shall receive, if you don't ask amiss; few indeed are saved, but 'tis not for want of Light and Love on God's part, but for want of Leaving and Liking on Man's part; Persons don't leave their Sins, and like their God, and therefore the Word is the Saviour of Death unto them.*

C H A P. VI.

Wherein is consider'd how Satan is concerned, as the Great Enemy of Souls, in the Words being the Saviour of Death.

VI. **T**H O' the Sin of *Man* is the real Cause of the Word's being the Saviour of Death unto Death, yet it must be acknowledged, that *Satan* the Great Enemy of Souls, is not a little concerned in it.

But

But few Persons in the World are duly sensible of the Power of Sin within them, and the Temptation of Satan without them, who for want of Care and Caution, are an easy Prey both to the one and the other: Satan is a deadly Enemy, he worketh by his Snares and Stratagems *Death*, notwithstanding the apt Directions, and powerful Motives of the the Word of Life. The Gospel is said to be *hid to those that are lost in Sin*, and the great Reason is, because the God of this World blinds ^{2 Cor. 4.} their Eyes; the Seed of the Word when sown ^{3, 4.} do's not take Root, or bring forth suitable Fruit, because the Devil sows his Tares; so that we ^{Matth. 13.} are to consider him as our Great Enemy, and ^{25.} beware lest we should be ignorant of his De- ^{2 Cor. 2.} vices, because our Adversary the Devil, as a ^{11.} roaring Lion, walketh about seeking whom he may ^{1 Pet. 5.8.} Devour. He is a subtle, cunning Enemy, all kind of Deceit is in Holy Scripture charged upon Satan, and that in the highest Degrees, such as *Logical Fallacies*, (a) and *Political Deceits*; ^{Rev. 12.7.} as he is a Prince he discovers the greatest Policy in the Management of his Kingdom, that he may deceive Immortal Souls; he is also represented as a Warriour, and his War- ^{2 Tim. 2.} like Stratagems are very deep and dangerous: ^{26.} By his Craft some are said to be enticed as ^{James 1.} Fish by a Bait, others deluded as by Cheaters in ^{Eph. 4.14.} a false Game, and 'tis certain that with him ^{2 Thess. 2.} is all deceiveableness of Unrighteousness; this he ^{10.} evidently discover'd in the Temptation of Eve, and in the Matter of Uriah. This Serpent ac-

(a) Νόημα.

quaints himself with the *State* and *Condition* of Men, and then provides *suitable* Temptations, and makes the *Proposal* with all possible Advantage, either *immediately* himself, or by *Proxy*, and then *urges* the Matter with earnest Solicitation, and secret Energy, until he has *enticed* the Heart to consent. As he is a *cunning Enemy*, so he is *Malicious*, in accusing God to us, and us to God; so his (a) Name signifies — for this Reason he is called the *Wicked One*, as Anger, Indignation, Hatred and Malice make up a very considerable part of his Character: Tho' he is miserable beyond all Expression, yet will he tempt others, and attempt the ruin of those that are in any degree Happy: Thus will he seek all *Occasions*, pursue the *least Advantages* for the Destruction of Souls, and will sometimes Tempt, *even where* he knows he can't prevail; as (b) in the Case of our Blessed Lord. As he is a *malicious Enemy*, so he is a *very powerful one*, he excels in Strength, and has great Authority, which is signify'd by the Titles of *Thrones, Dominions, Principalities and Powers*; the same Terms and Names that are given to *good Angels*, to signify Strength and Commission, are ascribed to Satan, who has indeed done Wonders, by raising Tempests in the Air, and bringing down Fire from

Col. 1. 16.

Ep. 6. 12.

(a) 'Ο Ἀντίδικος, an Adversary at Law, Διδόλος, a Slanderer.

(b) Those Expressions, if thou be the Son of God, fall down, &c. don't imply any doubt in Satan, for he knew what was prophesied of Christ, and what had been declared from Heaven concerning him; Malice may provoke, when it knows it cannot prevail.

Hea-

Heaven, as in the Case of *Job*; by carrying Persons thro' the Air, as our Blessed Lord; Mark 5.4. by diseasing and distressing Body and Soul, Lu. 13.16. as the Woman bowed down, the Lunatick Person, and despairing *Judas* do sufficiently testify; so great is his Power, that he thought fit to grapple with an Angel of Light for the *Body* Jude 9. of *Moses*, and he do's this Day contend with many such for the *Spiritual Body* of Christ. As he is a Powerful, so he is a *Watchful*, *Diligent Enemy*, he goes about seeking whom he may devour, 1 Pet. 5.8. he compasses Sea and Land with surprising Expedition, to discover and pursue what will answer his own ends, suggesting those things that are most apt to promote them, pursuing every Advantage he gets to the utmost, using various Ways and Methods, not confining himself to one Plot or Design, being fully intent on the Destruction of Souls. This Enemy is peculiarly engaged, and enraged against the Worship and Word of God, to prevent its saving Influence on Souls; he well knows the *Word* of God is our great defensive *Weapon*, as 'tis call'd the *Sword of the Spirit*; and therefore his great Design is to strip us of that, as the *Philistines* took away the *Smiths*, lest the *Hebrews* should make them 1 Sam. 13. Swords and Spears; so that in the Battle there 19. was neither *Sword* nor *Spear* in the Hand of the People that were with *Saul* and *Jonathan*. He knows that the Word is our *Food*, 'tis Provision as well as *Ammunition*, 'tis *sincere Milk* to strengthen and refresh, and therefore he endeavours to hinder our receiving it, and then we fade as a *Leaf*, our *Moisture* is as the *Drought of Summer*, and for want of due Sustenance,
we

we become as *those that go down into the Pit*. The Peculiar Malice and Spite of the Devil against God, engages him with the utmost Vigour against the Word of God, and in his vigorous Pursuits, and subtle Managements, he seldom fails; his Bow, like that of *Saul* and *Jonathan*, returns not empty; for but few do attend on, and apply the Word, with due Sincerity and Seriousness; few are awed with serious Apprehensions of the Divine Majesty, fill'd with Reverence, animated with Love, quickened by Faith, or cloath'd with Humility, when they hear or read the Book of Life: And thus by the Temptation of Satan it proves *Death* instead of *Life*.

The Concern of Satan in this matter, doth principally lie in two things:

1. In *Prevention*.
2. In *Corruption*.

I. In *Prevention*. Three things Satan by his Policy and Power endeavours to prevent. (1.) Due *Attendance* on the Word. (2.) Due *Attention* to the Word. (3.) Due *Application* of the Word.

1. He endeavours to prevent *due Attendance*. Sometimes he does this by *external Hindrances*: as we are told that the Apostle *Paul* would have come to the *Thessalonians* once and again, *but* 2 Thess. 2.
18. *Satan hindered him*. The Devil makes use often of worldly Business, and unhallow'd Differences, to prevent a constant appearance in the House of God. Sometimes he takes the advantage of *bodily Indispositions*; the Body shall be served in our own Houses, tho' the Soul starves for want of the Bread of God's House. The Eyes of many

ny on the Lord's-day are heavy, that they can't watch for Christ one Hour. They that on other Days are *most wakeful*, so as to rise up early and sit up late, are, thro' the Temptation of (a) Satan, (who without question has a mighty Influence on the Humours of the Body) *most drowsy* on the Lord's-day. And the Devil oftentimes improves *spiritual Indispositions* for the same End; as the *Sluggishness* of the Spirit, the *Carefulness* of the Soul as to the things of this World; the *Ignorance* of some, the *Passion* of others, and the *Prejudice* of many, so that they have not Leisure or Inclination to attend on the Ordinances of God. Oftentimes he prevents Souls by *various Discouragements*; representing their Duty as a *Toil and a Burden*, so that they say *Behold, what a weariness is it? When will the New-moon be gone, that we may sell Corn; and the Sabbath, that we may set forth Wheat?* Sometimes he tempts us to think that our Attendance will be *in vain*; so that we are ready to cry out *Why wait we on the Lord any longer? He does not answer us by Dreams, nor by Urim, nor by Prophets; it is in vain therefore to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his Ordinances? Wherefore have we fasted, and thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our Souls, and thou takest no knowledge?* Sometimes he tempts them to think there is *no need of Publick Ordinances*, that the Closet may be as useful as the Temple; tho' God declares he is thereby more honoured, and the Creature more benefited, that *he loveth the Gates of*

Mat. 1. 13.

Am. 8. 5.

2 Kings

6. 33.

1 Sam. 28.

6, 7.

Is. 58. 2.

(a) See Gilpin's Temptations, p. 1. c. 17.

Ps. 87. 2. *Zion more the Dwellings of Jacob.* Unless Persons are wiser than God, they may be sure that all Private Duties are but as so many *Steps* by which they are to ascend to the House of God. At other times the Enemy of Souls will tempt them to conclude that they are *not worthy* to appear in his Sanctuary to take his Name in their Mouths, and lift up their Eyes to Heaven, but they are both allowed and commanded, and therefore may come and receive the Blessing: These are some of the Devices of Satan, whereby the Word, for want of due *Attendance*, proves to be *Death* to many.

2. The great Enemy of Souls endeavours to prevent *due Attention*. He sometimes represents the Ordinances of God as *mean and contemptible*, Prayer and Preaching as *Foolishness*,
 2 Cor. 11. 3. *tho' 'tis both the Wisdom and Power of God among such as are perfect.* Many take offence, as the *Corinthians* did, at the *Simplicity of the Gospel*: sometimes, perhaps, he brings to mind the *Sins of Professors*, which makes many abhor the Offerings of the Lord; or he'll tempt them to think on *their own Grandeur and Prosperity*, till thro' Pride they are ready to say *Who is the Lord, that we should serve him?* and who is the Minister, that we should submit to *hear him?* Must a *Prince* wait on the *Priest*, and the gilded Equipage attend on the earthen Vessel? And thus many ways will Satan *distract the Thoughts*, so that the Heart shall not be *united to hear the Lord*. As the Fowls of the Air gather up the Seed, so vain Thoughts eat up the Word, and prevent not only the Pleasure, but the Profit, of the most serious, judicious, and warm Discourses. The Devil does oftentimes
 Mat. 13. 4. distract

distract the Mind in Duty, by *outward Disturbances*, as to the Eye and Ear; and by *inward Workings*, which are very secret and very powerful; and if he does not distract the Mind, he is ready (without great Care) to cast a Man into a *deep Sleep*; and so at once turning him into a *praying or hearing Statue*, he shall be as dead in Nature, and thereby continue *dead in Sin*; and so the Word no more affects him, than an Eccho does a Rock, or a single Breath a Marble Pillar. The Man may *dream* of Heaven, but that *Dream* may prove his *Death*. He that slept when the Apostle preached, *fell down*; and they that slumber under the Word of Life, without a Miracle are likely to fall into an eternal Hell. Without *attentive Thought* there is but little difference between *Church* and *Church-yard*, where all alike sleep the Sleep of Death.

3. Satan, if he does not prevent due *Attention* to, will endeavour to prevent due *Application* of the Word of God. He is ready to divert the Mind, by tempting some to think the Word is *not suitable* and *seasonable*, that it don't reach their Case, or concern them, whose Circumstance may be very peculiar as to supposed Knowledge, Purity, and Improvement; what is spoken they may apprehend to be only fit for *Babes in Christ*, and not for *Young-men* or *Fathers*: Or what shall be delivered with the greatest Sincerity and Seriousness, they shall think was spoken with *Design*, which soon moves their Pride and Passion, whereby they are prejudiced against the most important Truths. If Satan does not gain his point *this way*, then he endeavours to divert the Mind

Mind from the most suitable and seasonable Discourse *by Delays*, so that they will put off present Application, with a Pretence that they *will hear of that matter another time*; and so those Reviews of the Soul, and Enquiries into the state of their Case are prevented, which are necessary to a saving Impression of Divine Truth. Such Persons will hear Sin reprov'd and Duty urged, and yet never ask the Question, as the Disciples did our blessed Lord, when he told them that one of them would betray him; *Lord, Is it I?* Tho' the Word, as the Finger of the Lord, points directly at their *Guilt*, they will not give it a *second View*, but turn their Eye off from the Hand-writing on the Wall, and so don't *tremble at the Word*: And if any are convinced by the Terrors of the Lord, then the great Stratagem of Satan, is to divert the awakened Spirit by a *needle's Visit, idle Book, or merry Companion*, whereby, tho' they have look'd into the Glass of the Word, and been terrify'd with the sight of their Sin, they go away, and *forget what manner of Persons they were*: They receive the sacred Food, but for want of due Retirement, serious Meditation, fervent Supplication, and warm Application, they don't *digest* it, and so it cannot be Life unto them. This is the great Snare of the Devil as to *Prevention*.

II. Satan is not only concerned in *Prevention*, but in *Corruption*, whereby the Word becomes the *Savour of Death*. Some Persons may attend on, and attend to the Word, and yet by the Subtilty of Satan, the Duty shall be corrupted, and the saving Blessing of the Word

Word prevented. This he does, by tempting to a careless undertaking what should be perform'd with the greatest Solemnity. Many there are that *take no heed to the Frame of their Spirits, don't keep their Foot when they go into the House of the Lord*; and so when they are in it, only offer the Sacrifice of Fools: As they draw near to God with their Mouth, and honour him with their Lips, when their Hearts are far from him. Some appear before God in their own Strength, and so forfeit the Divine Assistance, by not sanctifying Him in their Hearts, who will be glorify'd among all the People. Some propose to themselves wrong Ends, in hearing, and so only bring forth fruit to themselves; as Pride and Humour, Custom and Self-Interest, are with many the great Motives, without a due regard to Conscience, and the Concerns of eternal Life. Such, with the Pharisees, have their Reward; as they come to Church, that they may look on the Pinacle, and see how the Wind of worldly Interest sits, or shifts; as they sow to the Wind, they shall reap the Whirlwind. Some hear the Word with a Resolution not to leave their Sins; and so because they regard Iniquity in their Heart, their Sacrifices are an Abomination to the Lord; as they don't lay aside all filthiness and Superfluity of Naughtiness, they can't receive the engrafted Word to the Salvation of their Souls. Others thro' the Temptation of Satan, when they hear are more concerned about the Novelty, than Importance of a Truth; the artificial Method of a Sermon, than its real Propriety and great Spirituality, and are more pleased with the Finery of the Dress, than the Force of the Discourse, with the musical Voice of the Speaker, than with

the *sacred Import* of the thing spoken, and so plain and powerful Truths, that are most apt to convince the Conscience, and bring it under the Authority of the Word, are rejected with Disgust and Disdain. And if this is not the Case, then 'tis very usual with Satan after hearing to tempt to *Spiritual Pride*, or *Carnal Security*; and then tho' the Ear has the *Word* of God, the Heart has not the *Work*, without which it can't be the *Savour of Life*. Thus is Satan concern'd. In this matter we have no reason to complain, because without a *Temptation*, our present State could not be a *State of Probation*. God permits the Enemy of Souls to tempt for his *own Glory*, and *our Good*; but he don't allow him to *infuse* Evil into us, or to *force* us to evil, but only to try what evil is in us; for when a Man is tempted, he is *led aside by his own Heart's Lust*. Our blessed Lord was tempted to Blasphemy, Despair, and Self-murder; but the Attempt was fruitless, because Satan *found nothing in him*. 'Tis our own Sin that proves our great Snare. How subtle and powerful soever the Devil may be, the Almighty Spirit is ready to assist and succour us, who will magnify his Power in *treading Satan under our feet*; if we duly apply to him, and firmly trust in him, that gracious Assistant will never suffer us to be *tempted above what we are able to bear*, as to Sin or Sorrow, if we pray to him, and comply with him. Besides God in his Word cautions us against the *Depths, Wiles, and Devices*, of the great Enemy of Souls, and obliges us to look to Him for renewed Strength, that at length we may be *more than Conquerors*; He furnishes us with *spiritual Armour*, an Ar-

mour of Light, that (as Sun-beams) must scatter the Powers of Darknes, if we keep it *Bright*, and with it walk in the Light ; and the Great God he always solicits us to Good, as Satan do's to Evil, and draws us with the Cords of a Man, while Satan endeavours to fasten on us the Chains of Sin and Hell. 'Tis certain, he that is with, or in them that Watch and Pray, is *stronger than he that is in the World*, and if they resist him, he *will flee from them* ; if they Pray, they shant be his Prey ; and they are with the greatest Wisdom and Kindness directed so to do, in the most excellent form of their Saviour, where 'tis very observable, that the Petitions of not *being led into Temptation*, but of *being delivered from Evil*, are joined with our Request for *Daily Bread*, and *Daily Pardon* ; we need the one as much as the other, and the one should *every Day* put us in mind of the other ; and we are as *sure of the one* by continuing in Prayer and Holy Prudence, and Practice, as we can possibly be of the other ; and therefore we have no reason to com- 2 Cor. 12.
plain, for *the Grace of God will be sufficient for* 9. 3. 5.
us : How potent must we be, when our *Suf-* Phil. 4. 13.
ficiency is of the Lord, and we can *do all things*
thro' Christ that strengthens us ? Give Glory there-
fore to God, and don't complain ; for he is
ready to give *Grace* to you, that you may not Rom. 12.
be overcome with Evil, but may *overcome Evil* 21.
with Good.

C H A P. VII.

Wherein is Consider'd what is the Great Cause of the Words being the Saviour of Life.

I V **A**S it has been considered whence it is that the Word of God is the *Savour of Death*, so it remains to be consider'd, what is the *Cause of the Words being the Saviour of Life unto Life*, which was the *Fourth General Head proposed*: In this enquiry, we are not to be wise above what is written; and from prevailing Pride, and predominant Self-Love, ascribe that to Man, which is the *appropriate Work of God*. The Living God must be the Author of this Life, its Original must be Divine; for 'tis said we are born *from above*, are begotten not of the *Flesh*, nor of the *Will of Man*, but of the *Will of God*; of his own *Will begets he us by the Word of Truth*. No Truth doth shine with a clearer Light, and more irresistible Brightness in the whole Book of God, than this; that the *glorious Grace of God*, is the *real Cause of the Words being the Saviour of Life unto any*; it sparkles in the Sacred Pages as a Sunbeam. It has been already said, that the Word is the *Savour of Life*, as it *sanctifies and saves*; and it fully appears, that our Sanctification, Justification, and Salvation, are owing to the
Grace

Joh. 3. 3.

Joh. 1. 13

Jam. 1. 18.

Grace of God. 'Tis said of those that were sanctify'd, that they *had obtain'd Mercy*, and 1 Pet. 2. 10. the Scripture assures us, that *we are justified* Rom. 3. *freely of Gods Grace*, and by *Grace we are saved*. 24. This Sacred Life in all its Parts and Powers, Eph. 2. 8. is the Production of Rich Grace, as propos'd and accepted, apply'd and improved? What but this drew the Mysterious Scheme of our Redemption? What but this put an Apostate World into a capacity of Salvation, and fixt a second Trial for the recovery of condemned Sinners? What but this moved the *Sacred Trinity*, Father, Son and Spirit, to concern themselves for the Purity, Pardon, and Felicity of polluted, guilty, perishing Souls? Did not this incline the *Father* to propose, and commission the *Son* to perform, and send forth the *Spirit* to perfect what was necessary to this glorious saving Enterprize? Did not this *endite* the Word, *make way* for its Ministration and Reception; and do's it not *incline* the Soul to attend on it, and by due attention *prepare* it for a saving Change? and do's not the Spirit of all Grace *enlighten* the Understanding by the Word, *awaken* the Conscience, *conquer* the Will, *raise* the Affections, and *quicken* the Executive Powers, whereby the Soul dead in Sin, is made *alive* to God? The Holy Scripture obliges us by irresistible Light, to ascribe all this to the *meer Grace* of God; if considered in its *Exercise* or *Effect*, in its *Proposal* or *Production*: which Distinction I shall more particularly represent as useful in this Great Concern: So that I shall a little consider this Point: 1. *In the General*; 2. *More Particularly*.

1. In the General; and here it may be proper to consider *two Things* :

1. That this Sacred Life is owing to the Grace of God.

2. That Grace is Glorious Grace.

1. This Sacred Life is owing to the Grace of God. As the *Fault and Folly* of Man is the real Cause of the Damnation of some, so the *Favour* of God is the *Principal Cause* of the Salvation of others. The Apostle Paul was a proper Judge in this matter, who always disclaims *Self*, and exalts the Grace of God in the whole concern of Spiritual Life: He thankfully owns, that he *obtained Mercy*, not meerly as an *Apostle*, but as a *converted Sinner*, and Phil. 4. 13. declares that he lived by *Christ*, who by his Spirit lived in him; that he laboured only by the assisting Grace of God, and only hoped for a final acceptance in the Beloved, he was as nothing in his own Eyes, which made him both thankful and fruitful: the same he declares concerning others, who were Sanctified and Justified, that they *obtained Mercy*; perhaps every serious Christian will give his *Verdict*, when in a right Frame, that all that is good in him is from God. The Heathens themselves have signified so much, the Words of the Moralist Seneca are very remarkable, when he says, (a) *The Gods are not proud nor envious, but do*

(a) Non sunt Dii fastidiosi, non invidi admittunt, & ascendentibus manus porrigunt. Miraris hominem ad Deos ire? Deus ad homines venit, imò quod proprius est, in homines venit: Nulla sine Deo, Mens bona est, Sen. Ep. 73.

admit

admit Mortals to pray to them, are ready to assist them, they come to Men, yea, come into them, for no Mind can be good without God: The Eloquent (a) Cicero speaks often to the same purpose, and but few of the Renowned Philosophers are silent in this matter; the variety of Scripture Phrase sets the matter in a clear Light, and 'tis easie to argue from Scripture Evidence, that it must be so. Spiritual Life, as to Justification and Sanctification, is *gratuitous*, a Gift. If we consider the Nature of *Liberty*, we shall soon find that a Sinner is Sanctify'd, Justify'd and Saved *freely* by meer Grace. Liberty is either Natural or Moral, the one is opposed to Force, the other to Inducement or Obligation: Grace is not of so extensive an Import as Liberty, for it only refers to *Benefaction*; so that we may say its precise Notion is a Propensity to do good, without any Inducement, but the Inclination of Nature; it differs indeed as to the Object, if that is *Miserable*, 'tis call'd Compassion, if *Amiable*, 'tis Delight; 'tis the Principle, and not the Object that gives the Denomination of *Grace*; 'tis meer Grace when a Person *acts freely*, so that 'tis fit to consider what is requisite to render an *Act free*; if we take in every thing concerned in that Freedom, we shall soon find that Spiritual Life must be the effect of Free Grace. If a Person *acts freely*, it must be supposed that what he do's, do's not arise from any necessity of Nature? Surely the Life of a

(a) Nemo unquam Vir magnus sine afflatu Divino, Cic.

Saint, is not the Result of Natural Necessity. It must not proceed from any *outward Compulsion*; who did compel the Deity to sanctify and save one Soul? It must not proceed from *Mistake*, either as to the Extent, or Reason of the Act; do's not the Great God well know what he do's, when he acts according to the *Counsel of his own Will*? It must not be done from any *Obligation in point of Justice*; had not God been just, if he had so punished Sin, as not to save the Sinner? Indeed by virtue of the satisfaction of Christ, the Salvation of some is matter of *Justice*, as well as *Mercy*; but then it was Free-Grace that *appointed* the Meritorious Sacrifice, that *accepted* it, that gave any *notice* of it, and that gives that *Faith* that entitles to the Blessing of it; so that it becomes matter of Justice only by the Grace of God. Again what is done *freely*, must not be performed by any *Tye of Gratitude*; did we by any kindness oblige God to make any grateful Returns, so as to sanctify and save us? Alas, he

1 Joh. 4.19. *was found of us, before we sought him, we love him, because he first loved us.* That is done *freely*, which is performed without being prompted or solicited; who among the Children of Men were *Solicitors* for the Spiritual Life, antecedent to the Grace of God? 'Tis said God lookt down from Heaven, and there *were none that askt where is God my Maker?* the cry of all Sinners is, till the Spirit inclines the

Job 21.14. *Heart, Depart O Lord from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy Ways; none ever petitioned God that his Son might die for them, such a Request had been daring Insolence, he sent him without our seeking.* A thing is also
done

done freely, when there is no *valuable Consideration* to engage and incline the Person to perform it. What *valuable Consideration* can any among the Sons of Men pretend to, so as to lay Claim to a saving Operation? The Righteousness of Christ in our Justification, is a *valuable Consideration*; but why is the Righteousness of Christ imputed to us? Not for any Reason that is owing to our devising or performing: We *must believe* indeed; but what Advantage is our Faith to him that sanctifies and saves us? The Great Advantage is to our selves. As there is no present *valuable Consideration* on our part; so the Blessed God acts freely, as he can *have no prospect of any future Advantage*: Can a Man be profitable to God? The Job 22. 2. expence of our last Breath is a Duty, we owe him our All; who of the Sons of Men can say, my *Righteousness O God, extendeth unto thee*: A thing may be said to be done very freely, when done with great *Condescension*, and beyond all *Expectation*; who in the Apostate World were rightful or hopeful Expectants of a *vital saving Change*; surely 'twas amazing *Condescension* in the Deity, to offer Life and Salvation to Malignant Rebels, condemned Enemies. And to say no more, a Person *acts freely*, when he *takes pleasure in what he do's*, and *never repents of it*: the Work of Grace is call'd the *Pleasure of God's Goodness*; when he created the World, he took a view of the Works of his Hands, pronounced them *Good*, and then rested with Pleasure; but the New Creation is a much more Excellent, Glorious Performance, every Grace as 'tis part of the Moral Image of God, has more real Glory, than

than the *whole* Frame and Furniture of Nature, and so is a greater Delight to the Former of all Things : He *repented* that he made Man, but will never *repent* that he renews Man, and makes him a New Creature ; *that Gift of God is without Repentance*. These Considerations may satisfy a considering Mind, that our Spiritual Life is the effect of the Grace of God : Our Love to God, is as *Causeless* as to us, as our Hatred was *Causeless* as to him ; we *hated him without a Cause*, and *we only can love him, because he first loved us*.

2. 'Tis *Glorious Grace*. This Grace is glorious in its *Display*, and in its *Distinction* ; in its Display, Holy Scripture is full to this Purpose : 'Tis call'd *Rich Grace*, 'tis said under a Gospel Dispensation *Grace has abounded*, yea, tho' Sin has abounded, that do's *much more abound* ; *Grace is said to Reign*, 'tis *enthroned* as triumphing over the Sin and Misery of an Apostate World ; all our Purity and Felicity is to be ascribed to the *Glory of God's Grace*, as *we are accepted in the Beloved*. Consider O Soul, *who doth display this Grace in a sacred saving Change* ; 'tis the *Glorious Jehovah*, a Being *infinitely above us*, perfect beyond the Alphabet of Man, and Intellect of Angels ; a Being most *justly engaged* against us, as *Death had passed upon all Men, because all had sinned* ; a Being *able in a Moment to destroy us, to tear us in pieces*, so that none should deliver ; a Being that could *receive no Advantage* from us ; we did him *Wrong*, but we can't so much as do him *Right*, much less can we add to his Infinite Fulness ; a Being that was most *basely dishonoured* by us, and might have
glorify'd

Eph. 1. 6.

Rom. 5. 12.

glorify'd his Justice and Power in our Everlasting Destruction: How Glorious then must his Grace be, to sanctifie and save us? Consider O Soul the Persons to whom by his Grace he gives Spiritual Life; Creatures mean in their Extraction, having the same Original with a Worm or Fly, their Mother was Earth, and their Grandmother Nothing; Creatures that live on the Alms of Heaven, and are maintained by the Contributions of the Earth, who are beholden to a Bird, a Beast, a Fish, a Plant, for their daily Sustenance, who live by the Death and Spoil of the whole Creation: How glorious must this Grace be that visits Worms, embraces Moths, articles with Dust and Ashes, and sets the Heart on that which is not; as Man was framed from the Dust, he is Brother to the Worms, he is crush'd before the Job 4. 19. *Moth, and in a Moment is no more. The Grace will appear much more wonderful, if we consider Man in a Moral Capacity, as an Apostate Creature; he is more vile and infamous, than the basest and most venomous Creatures, he is the Curse and Scandal of the whole Creation, as he is a Polluted, Guilty, Malignant, Condemned, Self-destroying Wretch; Lord what is Man, that thou art thus* Pl. 8. 4. *mindful of him? Will God in very deed dwell on* 1 Kin. 8. *Earth? was the just Expostulation of one of* 27. *the wisest of Men; will he dwell on so small, so despicable, so vile and accursed a Spot, fill'd with Rebels and Traitors? will he dwell on Earth? One single glance of his Eye, is beyond all desert and expectation: 'Tis a wonder that he will so much as look towards it, and yet will he dwell? Afford a Real, an Intimate,*
a Con-

a Constant, and Complacential Presence, (as the Word signifies): How astonishing is this, will he dwell in our *Bodies* by his Son, in our *Hearts* by his Spirit, in our *Houses* by his Covenant, and in our *Assemblies* by his Vital Influences, commanding his Word to go forth, and give Life to *dead Souls*, in dying *Bodies*, that both may live for ever? Be astonisht O ye Heavens, rejoice all ye Children of Men, God do's tabernacle among you! Consider again O Soul, by *whom* the Blessed God doth display his Grace, *by his Son*, his only Son, his dying Son; Grace directed the only begotten of the Father to live as a Servant, and die as a Sacrifice, that Sinners might not perish, he dy'd that we might live: This is the Wonder of Heaven, and should be the Admiration of all the Earth; great indeed is *this Mystery of Godliness*, God manifest in the *Flesh*: Great is this Mystery of Love, that the *best of Beings*, should endure the *worst of Evils*; that the *worst of Beings*, might enjoy the *best of Blessings*; Lord, *what manner of Love is this?* Thy Word tells us, God *so loved the World*, an incomparable Particle (So) who can spell it?

Consider further O Soul, in *what manner* the Blessed God applies himself to perishing Sinners, that he may give them Life; he Addresses them with *Authority* as becomes his Majesty, commanding them *to turn to him*; but that Authority is the greatest Benignity, for it must be an unspeakable Mercy to be commanded, not to be miserable, not to be left *to our liberty* to ruin our selves, but to be *obliged to work out our own Salvation*: the Grace of a Precept is to be admired, as well as the
Grace

1 Tim. 3.

16.

1 Joh. 3. 1.

Joh. 3. 16.

Phil. 2. 12.

Grace of a Promise, without the one we should have *no leave* to Act, as without the other we should have *no power* to Act. The Great God as *intent* on the Salvation of Sinners, uses various Methods to prevail with them, all which are expressive of the greatest Love; to question his Sincerity in his Proposals, is a Degree of Blasphemy, at which some should tremble, not only when they *Despair*, but when they *Dispute*; he invites Sinners to come, he *beseeches* them, he *counsels* them, he *reasons* the Case, and *expostulates* with them, he *declares himself* ready to receive them; he *laments* their Refusal, *threatens* their Disobedience, and offers the most *suitable Assistance* and Encouragement to promote the present surrender of themselves to him, that he may work in them, and for them, *Life unto Life*. How Glorious is this condescending Grace, that *waits* ready to Work? That *stands at the Door and knocks*, that Sinners may hear the Voice of the Son of God, and live: Behold and wonder ye Children of Men, your Saviour once said at the Great Day of the Feast, that the more might hear him, *Ho every one that thirsteth, let him come and drink of the Waters of Life freely*: The Spirit and Bride do's now say, *Come, and whosoever will, let him come, and whosoever is a-thirst, let him come*; he that *hath an Ear, let him hear what the Spirit thus saith to the Churches, hear and live*. Consider further O Soul, what *Means and Methods* the Glorious God do's use to gain Sinners, and give them Life; all that are most suitable and likely to answer the great End, *Internal and External, Providential and Spiritual*, he works by

Ezek. 33.

11.

Rev. 3. 20.

Joh. 7. 37.

Rev. 22.

17.

by Promises and Threatnings, on Hopes and Fears that he may be successful, and may he not than say, *what can I do more*, worthy of my Self, and suitable to the Nature of Intelligent Creatures? to *force* is to destroy, and not to save; 'tis dishonourable, and indeed not desired, while the Sinner loves his Sin, and do's not leave it. *Consider* yet further O Soul, *how long* the Great God uses various Methods, before he suffers Sinners to perish by their obstinate Refusals, or before he gains the consent of Souls; he *waits long to be gracious*, *saves* the Tree many Years, that it may bring forth Fruit, before he *cuts it* down as a Cumberer of the Ground. And to say no more, *consider* for *what end* all this Grace is thus displayed; 'tis to *deliver* a Sinner from the greatest present, and future Evils, Sin, Death, and Hell, and to *invest* him with the most glorious Privileges, that he may be Sanctify'd, Justify'd, and Adopted into the very Line of Life; that he may be the peculiar Care of his Providence, the Concern of his Spirit, the Member of his Son, the Charge of Angels, a Delightful Communicant with himself, and a Glorious Inhabitant of an Eternal Heaven: And is not this Glorious Grace?

As this Grace is Glorious in its *Display*, so 'tis Glorious in its *Distinction* when it is Effectual; for as it sanctifies the Soul, it renders the State of that Man more secure, than the State of *Innocent Adam*, who was every Moment liable to Sin and Death; it discovers an astonishing difference between *fallen Men*, and fallen Angels, it *enables* the Human Nature in some Sense, more than the Angelical;

lical, as every Saint is a real Member of Christ; and it *raises* the Soul as high as Heaven, when the greatest part of a sinful World are perishing in their Sins, dropping every Day into a Gulph of Eternal Misery: This is *distinguishing Grace* indeed, which may very fitly as *Glorious*, be consider'd under a double Notion: 1. As *sufficient* for its End. 2. As *sovereign* in its Operation, and that both as to *Revelation* and *Application*.

1. This Glorious Grace is *sufficient* for its End. Without a *sufficiency* it could not be Glorious, insufficiency must be Inglorious; our Spiritual Life in all its Parts and Powers, Degrees, Improvement, and Perfection, must be ascribed to the Grace of God: 'Tis not of *Rom. 9.* him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of *16.* God that sheweth Mercy. This is the mighty Spring that sets all the Weights and Wheels of the New Creation agoing; this Grace is as *sufficient* as it is *necessary*; we may be sure of the one, when it is declared by the infallible Word, that of our selves we can't think one good *2 Cor. 3.* Thought, and without Christ we can do nothing: *5.* The same blessed Word assures us, that 'tis *John 15.* God only worketh in us to will and to do; that we *5. Philip. 2.* are saved through Faith, and that not of our selves, *13.* it is the Gift of God; and he that begins a *Eph. 2.* good work in us, doth perform it until the day of *Phil. 1.* Christ. The Divine Agency must not be supposed to exclude or excuse Man's Industry, no more than the Providence of God forbids the endeavour, or justifies the sloth of Man. The Blessing of God with the hand of the Diligent *Prov. 1.* maketh Rich, tho' 'tis not in Man that walketh *4, 22.* to direct his Steps, and God only giveth power to *Jer. 10.* any

any to get Riches. Thus is Man in Spirituals
 Phil. 2. 12. *commanded to work out his own Salvation, and yet to depend entirely on the Spirit of God in the use of Means for the due Performance; surely Grace and Duty are very consistent, when they are put together so often in one Text? Without such a Consistency, Men can neither pray to God, nor praise God according to Scripture Direction. This necessary Grace so consistent with our Endeavours, is every way sufficient to answer the Great End of Spiritual Life, both as to Sanctification and Salvation: As to Sanctification, it can change the most obdurate Heart, the Word being both its Measure and Instrument, it can convert the most obstinate Sinners. This Experience do's testify, and sacred Record abundantly prove. And as to Salvation, notwithstanding the power of indwelling Sin, the Solicitations of Satan, the Temptations of the World, and the many doubts and fears of weak Christians, Grace shall finally issue in Glory, the Sanctified shall be saved, the*
 Phil. 1. 6. *Work that is begun shall be carryed on unto Per-*
 2 Tim. 1. *fection, and that which is committed, shall be kept*
 12. *in the way of well-doing until the Day of the Lord. If any are not satisfy'd as to the necessity of the determining Grace of God, let them consider and ask a few Questions; Why do's the Scripture tell us that we are born of the*
 Joh. 1. 13. *Will of God? Why are we told that God*
 1 Cor. 4 7. *only makes us to differ? Why is he said to*
 Rom. 8. 30. *call us, to give a new Heart, and give us to*
 Ezek. 36. *believe? Why are we represented as dead in*
 26.

Mr. Hows Prescience, p. 46. See his Redeemers Tears.

Sin,

Sin, as having a Will not subject to the Law of God, and not to be willing to come to Christ that we may have Life? Why is it said that no Man *can* come to Christ, except the Father *draw* him? That we are *created* by him, and *raised* as from the dead? Why is the Promise of the Spirit represented in a *degree* so absolute, when the Great God says, I will put my *fear* in your Hearts, and will write my *Law* in the inward parts? Such Persons if they please, may make further enquiries, and ask themselves, have I not reason to think that the Elect shall infallibly be saved? that Christ did not die in vain as to any Soul? that the Great God is concerned in Salvation, as the Devil is in Damnation, so that Man do's not make himself to differ? by such enquiries it may soon appear, that the *efficacious* Grace of God in the Words being the *Savour of Life*, is necessary. If any question whether this supposed *necessary* Grace be *sufficient*, and is *offer'd as such*; let them ask also a few Questions; why should the Great God command me to believe, repent, and work out my Salvation, if he is not willing to enable me so to do? *Sincerity* in this case must imply a *Sufficiency*, either that I *have* a Power, or that he is *willing* to give such a Power: Why should God entreat, exhort, counsel, perswade, surely not to deceive or upbraid? Such a supposal is blasphemous? Why should Sinners that don't turn to him, be threatned with Destruction, if the promised offer'd Power for performance was not sufficient? Why are any encouraged with the promise of Eternal Life, if the term of it can't be fulfilled? Why should

Phil. 1. 29.
Eph. 2. 8.
Rom. 8. 7.
Joh. 5. 40.
Joh. 6. 44.
Jer. 32. 40.

God declare he delights not in the Death of a Sinner, that he waits long on Sinners, and asks the Question, whether he can do any more? and then charge the Destruction of Sinners on themselves? Why should Impenitent Sinners be represented as most inexcusable, as Speechless in the Day of Judgment? And why should the Worm of Conscience gnaw any in Hell, if what was not done, was impossible to be done? 'Tis weak and wicked for any to dispute against God and themselves? Why should the Question be askt, whether any particular Man has Grace *sufficient* to repent, who *do's not*; When such an one is to be *blamed* for not using what Grace *he had*, whether sufficient or no? Sufficient Grace is not to be consider'd as necessary to an infallible *ascertaining* of the *Act*, but as necessary to the *possibility* of the *Act*; for sufficient Grace may not be *effectual* as to the Event, as in the case of the *Fallen Angels*, who had sufficient Power to stand; in the case of *Adam*, who had Power enough to obey God; and in the case of *Believers*, who certainly don't do all that by the sufficient Grace of God they might do; and don't Impenitent Sinners misimprove the Grace of God, which either *was*, or *might have been*, if duly improved, *sufficient* for Salvation? God may most justly deny a higher degree of Grace, to those that have abused lower Degrees, as he may without *wrong to any*, give his Grace to whom he *pleases*. If a Sinner don't improve common Grace, 'tis both righteous with God to suspend that, and at the same time to deny special saving Grace, which is neither deserved nor
desired

desired by the Sinner. While the Sinner had a day of Grace, it must be allowed (a) possible for him to have been converted, or else I can't make Sense of those Important Words of our Blessed Lord, representing the Righteous Judgment of God on obstinate Sinners; he saith, that *seeing they may see, and not perceive, and hearing they may hear, and not understand, lest at any time they should be converted;* they might have been converted before that Time, or else it could be no Judgment not to be converted after. We may from hence be assured, that if they who having suitable Helps and Means, under a Gospel Dispensation, do perish for want of Saving Grace, it is their own Fault; a Fault it must be, because we are commanded to turn, to repent, to purify our selves, we are *not able to do this without God*; but we are *bound to do it*, as we are directed to the Spirit as able and willing to help us: now if it be a Fault, it can't be supposed without most horrid Blasphemy to be God's Fault. This is Impious beyond all Expression; when *Moses* gave an account what Methods a gracious God had used with the *Israelites*; he says, and yet the Lord hath not given you an Heart *Deut. 29.* to perceive, and Eyes to see, and Ears to hear unto this Day. The Context doth plainly shew, that Man is *not Excused*, or God *Reproached*, but the Fault of the *Israelites* is thereby aggravated: A Gracious God would have given you a New Heart, had you not been, after so many Methods were tryed to reclaim you, a

(a) Mr. Nath. Taylor on the Covenant.

stubborn and perverse Generation : If it be not therefore *God's Fault*, it must be *Man's Fault*, as he *will not come to Christ, that he may have Life*. How little sensible soever Sinners may be of it now, and how ready soever some are to dispute against this Truth, the Conscience of every Sinner will one day *preach* and *prove it* ; perhaps there never was an awakened Sinner, that on his Death-bed did thus charge God foolishly, as unjust and unkind ; but did condemn himself as a *Self-destroyer*, acknowledging with clear Conviction, and bitter Lamentation, O God ! thou would'st have purged me, but I would not be purged, I rejected thy Offers, slighted thy Counsels, resisted thy Spirit, despised thy Word, neglected a day of Grace ; and now 'tis a righteous thing with thee to forsake me utterly, and let me reap the Fruit of my own doings ; Ah Fool, Ah Wretch that I am, I have destroyed my self.—

2. The glorious Grace of God is *Sovereign* as to its Operation, as well as *sufficient* as to its End. The Sovereignty of God is opposed by the Pride of Man, who would gladly live on his *own Fund*, set up for a self-sufficient Being, and appear as his own Saviour ; tho' nothing should be more desirable than Grace, yet *Sovereign Grace* is not agreeable to the Temper of many. 'Tis very remarkable that our Blessed Lord for preaching the free distribution of Favours, without any regard to Human Worth and Excellency, was in danger of *being murther'd* : When he discoursed concerning the Widow of *Sarepta*, and *Naaman* the Syrian, the People were filled with Indignation,

nation, and endeavour'd to cast him down
Head-long from the brow of the Hill: But let vain
 Man pride himself as he please, this is one
 Letter of Gods Name, when he proclaims
 himself, *I will be Gracious, to whom I will be* Exod. 33.
Gracious. Christ himself, who could not pos- ^{19.}
 sibly mistake, ascribes the sacred Manifesta-
 tion of Light and Love to Sovereign Mercy,
even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. Lu. 10. 21.
 Holy Men in all Ages, have admired and
 adored this distinguishing Grace, as Judas
 said, (not Iscariot); Lord how, *is it that thou* Joh. 14. 22.
wilt manifest thy self to us, and not to the World?
 It was Judas that was so affected with the
 special discoveries of Divine Love, not the
 vile Traytor, that Son of Perdition, but ano-
 ther kind of Person, tho' one of the same
 Name. In this matter the Scripture is very
 plain, that if any are saved, 'tis not because
 they are *more worthy*, or *less unworthy* than o- 1 Cor. 1. 21.
 thers; but *because it so pleaseth God*: he is said
 to work in such of his *own good pleasure*, as
 freely, as delightfully; he prepares *the Vessels of*
Glory; he *makes them to differ*; and 'tis he that
gives to know the Mysteries of the Kingdom, when Mat. 13. 11.
to others it is not given. 'Tis this Sovereign
 Grace that invites the *halt and maimed*, such
 as are in the *Streets and Lanes by the High-ways* Lu. 14. 21.
or Hedges: 'Tis this chuses the *poor of this World*,
 and makes them *rich in Faith, and Heirs of a* James 2.
Kingdom. 'Tis this hides the *great things of the* ^{1, 2, 3.}
Gospel from the Wise and Prudent, and reveals Lu. 10. 21.
them unto Babes. 'Tis fit to be observed, that
 Divine Grace has discover'd it self to *Inferior*
Persons, when the most *considerable Personages*
 have not been acquainted with it, which shews

the Sovereignty of it beyond all Contradiction. One would have thought, that as the Beams of the Rising-Sun strike first on the tops of the Hills, so the dawning of the Day of Christ, had been first perceived by the *most exalted* amongst Men; but on the contrary, the first News of an appearing *Messiah*, was given to *Zachariah* an Ordinary Priest of the course of *Abias*, and *Elizabeth* his Wife. Three *Wise Men* indeed of the *East*, were informed of Christ's Nativity, by a New Star; but a more considerable number of poor Shepherds, received the glad Tydings from the Angels, the Morning-stars. When our Saviour was brought into the Temple, the *Scribes* and *Pharisees* did not know him, only *two Aged Persons*, *Simeon* and *Anna*, who were only remarkable for their Piety: the intimate Friends of Christ, were not Princes or Rabbies, but Persons of the lowest Rank. A poor Woman of *Samaria*, is instructed in the Mysteries of Salvation, and King *Herod* is not minded: the Heart of *Lydia* that *sold purple* was opened, when King *Agryppa* and *Festus* that wore it, were but almost perswaded; so *sovereign* is the display of Divine Grace to humble Man, and advance the Glory of God: Not many *wise Men* after the *Flesh* are call'd, but he hath chosen the foolish and weak things of the World, that no *Flesh* might glory in his Presence; but that whosoever glorieth, should glory in the Lord alone. This Grace may be consider'd as Sovereign, which is the cause of Life: 1. As to *External Revelation*: 2. As to *Internal Manifestation*.— 1. As to *External Revelation*. The Great God discovers his Mind, by his *Word* and *Messengers*, when

and
and

Matth. 2.
1, 2.

Acts 26.
28.

1 Cor. 1.
25.

and *where he pleases*; he strikes a Light in a dark Place, and extinguisheth the shining Lamp that is neglected or abused; he *sends forth his Light and Truth* at Pleasure, as in the first Creation he said, *let there be light*. 'Tis Melan-Gen. 1.3.
choly indeed to consider how (a) little a part of the Earth is enlightened with the Word of Life, how inconsiderable is the extent of a Gospel Savour? The *Sacred Odour* do's not diffuse and spread far; if the Earth was divided into thirty Parts, it may be supposed that nineteen of them are *Pagan*, six *Mahometan*, and but five Christian. Good God! how careless are most about their own Salvation, and the Salvation of others! Christ shewed himself at first in the *Central part* of the World, *Ju-dea* was as much so, as any we can easily fix on; the Knowledge of Christ like Light, might have diffused it self throughout the whole Circumference, had it not been for the Pride and Prejudice, Sloth and Covetousness of Mankind. We find that near the Place of our *Saviour's Nativity*, only *two Persons* were settled, and they multiply'd and fill'd the whole Earth, without the working a Miracle, by raising new Generations out of the Ground; and if a *Bible* had been fixt in the same Place, it might have been carry'd all over the World long ago, without any *Miraculous Appearance* of God: if Men had been as faithful to their Souls as to their Bodies, as much concerned about the Pearl of Price, the Great Salvation, as about common Trade and Traffick.

(a) Mr. Nath. Taylors Sermon before the Lord Mayor.

That the World is so little acquainted with God, is not to be charged on God, but Man; for the Deity was not *obliged* to reveal himself at all to an Apostate World, he might have made the Earth as dark as Hell; but it pleased God to reveal to *Adam* his gracious Design of Salvation, telling him, *that the Seed of the*

Gen. 3. 15. *Woman should break the Serpents Head*; the Knowledge of this Blessed Design, was transmitted by *Adam* to his Posterity; if Man had not been *then* wanting to himself, all the World had been acquainted with the Grace of God. But alas, Men did not only by their *own neglect*, lose the notices that were given them for Direction and Encouragement, but they lost the *very notion of God himself*, as they sunk into gross Idolatry, which was the just provoking Cause of their being deserted by God. But yet it pleased God in order to recover the languishing, expiring, forfeited Light, to separate for himself a *peculiar People*, and set them as a *Lamp* to give Light to the dark World; to them were *committed the Oracles of God*, so that by *consulting the Oracle*, the Earth might again become wise: there was indeed a *Wall of Partition*, but that was rather to keep the *Jews in*, than the *Gentiles out*: The Light had spread very far for the direction of Souls, had it not been for the *base prejudice* of the *Jews*. After the appearance of our Blessed Lord, this *Inclosure* was laid open, and *fresh Light* was added to the Oracle, a bright one to irradiate the *whole Earth*: If Men had been diligent in its Improvement and Enlargement, our Bibles might have been carried as far as our Silver and Gold: if *we had searcht for Wis-*

dom

dom, as for Silver, there was no more need of Prov. 2. 4
an Angel to convey the Sacred Book from Nation to Nation, than there was for him to teach us to Write and Read ; 'tis not necessary that an *Act of Parliament* should be publisht in every particular House, when all the Subjects may easily see and read it ; no more necessary is it for God in a *miraculous* manner to inspire Persons in all Kingdoms, when the inspired Book may be as easily sent to all, and as easily understood by all. Where the Gospel Light has been extinguishd, the Candle of the Lord removed, it has been owing to the *Wickedness of Men*, to a *Lukewarmness* of Spirit, or *Licentiousness* of Life, as in the case of the *Asiatick Churches* : where there is not the Gospel Light, so that the *Ignorance* of Man is *invincible*, and it were not possible by any natural or artful Means to receive the Gospel ; these Persons will be judged according to what Light they have ; so that by these Considerations it may appear, that the Fault is great on Mans part, tho' the Grace of God as to an external Revelation is Sovereign : It cannot be otherwise, for he is *Debtor to no Man*, and need not give any account of his Matters.

Rom. 6. 12

2. This Grace is sovereign as to Internal Manifestation. That the Light of the Glorious Gospel do's shine into the Hearts of any, is owing to the meer Grace of God ; 'tis he as has been already observed, that writes the Law in the Heart ; which Phrase most strictly

Ἐν καρδίᾳ καὶ ἐν ψυχῇ σε, in thy Heart and Soul, Septuagint.

signi-

signifies a *perspicuous Revelation* of the Will of God, and an *efficacious Impression* of it on the Soul. The Promise of the first special Saving Grace, can't be Conditional in a *strict Sense*; (a) for then Persons at *all Times*, and in *all Cases*, in the use of Means must fulfil the *Condition*, in order to the obtaining of renewing Grace; but this is contrary to Experience, as in the case of the Apostle Paul, and others, where God was *found before he was sought*: But yet the Promise is not *so absolute* neither, as to render the *use* of appointed Means to obtain Grace *needless*, that is contrary to the express Word of Scripture; for when God

Ezek. 36. says, *A new Heart will I give you*, he says also, *I will yet for all this be enquired of by the*

26. *House of Israel to do it for them*. They that have outward and inward Helps and Means must use them, and such have a great Tendency to promote our Spiritual Welfare, or else they are no *Helps* at all; and the Promises of Grace give all desirable encouragement for Hope and Endeavour; there is not so necessary connexion between Endeavour and Grace, as there is between Grace and Glory; but there is a very likely encouraging Tendency of the one to the other: There is not a *necessary connection* in Nature, between Industry and Riches, and yet none complain, but believe, that in *that way* they may be Rich, and why should they not do so in the concerns of Grace? The Spirit is promised *more* *absolutely*, than *Breath* or *Bread*, for that is only

(a) See Mr. Nath. Taylor of the Covenant.

promised *if for their good*, but the Spirit is promised *as good*; you may be *more sure* of the one, than you can be of the other, so that the connexion seems to be more *probable* in *Grace*, than in *Nature*; for 'tis no where said, Eat and Drink, and to *Morrow* you shall live; but 'tis positively said, *turn unto me, and I will pour out my Spirit upon you, ask and you shall receive*. Lord what can be desired more? how ^{1 Prov. 1.} vain is the dispute of Man? The Promise of ^{23.} the Spirit is the great *Gospel Promise*, as the Promise of the *Messiah*, was the *Great Promise* under the Jewish Dispensation, and it stands between the Promise of the *Messiah*, and the Promise of *Eternal Life*, which are the three *Great Promises*; now if the *middle Promise* is not fulfilled, *viz.* that of the Spirit; the *first* Promise was fulfill'd in *vain*, and the *last* can't be fulfill'd *at all*; for without the Spirit, we can't *receive* Christ now he *is come*, so that to us he must come in *vain*; and without the *same Spirit*, we can't be *prepared* for Heaven, and so that can never be enjoyed: of *all Promises* therefore we should encourage our selves in the hope of *this*; for as sure as Christ is come, and as sure as Heaven will be possess'd, so sure it is that the Promise of the Spirit will be fulfilled. Fall down therefore O Man in the Dust, and plead with God as a *Lower* of Souls, the *Father* of Mercies, *faithful* to his *Promise*, that he would give thee his Holy Spirit; one hour spent in Prayer, will do thee more Service, than thy whole Life spent in Disputing. I may consider this Point more largely hereafter, at present I'll only offer the Sense of an Heathen, which I think

Rom. 8.
32.

think considerable ; (a) *Tis a thought unworthy of God, that he should be liberal in bestowing mean things on us, but penurious as to better ——— He that hath given us his Son, will he not with him freely give us his Spirit, and all things ?*

Tho' his Grace is sovereign, yet his *Love* to * some does not imply *Hatred* to others ; and we need not say that the blessed God if he pleased might save all, *willing* or *unwilling* ; for all that God *can* do, is not *fit* for him to do ; he must consult his own Glory, he is not *obliged* to do all he can ; who is his Counsellor, or to whom is he a Debtor ? Why should he exert the *utmost Power*, when thou dost not improve common Mercy ? Why should he *force* thee to be holy and happy in a way contrary to thy Nature ? If he should do so to one, all had the *same reason* to expect it, and so the whole Method of Grace would be superseded ! What he does is most wise and just, if he gives to one he takes nothing from another ; 'tis no wrong to me that he made an Angel a more glorious Creature than my-self ; and 'tis no injury to me, if he gives his Grace to any, and not to me. He is our Proprietor as well as Benefactor, and so may *do with his own as he pleases* ; for what he

(a) Maximus Tyrius, Diff. 22. Ὁ πολλὸ ἀξίον νομίζει, &c.

* 'Tis said, Jacob have I loved, and Esau have I hated : If that does not refer to political temporal Concerns, yet the word *Hatred* must not be understood in a strict sense for *Malignity* or utter *Aversion*, but it signifies less Love ; as we are commanded to hate Father and Mother for Christ sake, that is, love them less than Christ. Who can suppose God does hate a Creature merely as such ?

gives

gives is no Man's Right : Besides he does *great things* for us, beyond Desert and Expectation, and shall we thus requite him ? He is more kind *to us* than we are to others, yea, than we are to our *very selves* ; for *his ways are as much above ours, as the Heavens are above this Earth.* Isai. 55. 9. We may be sure if he makes a difference between us and others, he is *not unjust*, for we can merit nothing ; nor *unkind*, for we have received much from him, and done but little for him, and much against him. *Who art thou,* Rom. 9. therefore, O Man, that darest to dispute or *re-* 20. *ply against thy Maker ?* Be still, O proud Dust, and know that *He is God, and doth whatsoever he* Dam. 4. *pleases in the Armies of Heaven, and among the In-* 35. *habitants of the Earth.* 'Tis daring Insolence to direct Omniscience, limit absolute Sovereignty, and challenge the Almighty-One. Thou art, O Man, but Clay, and God will form and fashion at pleasure : His way is *past finding out* ; but yet this thou mayest be sure of, as of the very Existence of God, that *He delights not in* Ezek. 18. *thy death.* His Mouth has spoken it, let thine 31. therefore be stop'd. Don't *darken Counsel with Words without Knowledge* ; but believe the Word of God, and then leave the Issue With God ; if thou art sanctify'd thou shalt be saved : O *the depth of the riches both of the Wisdom and Know-* Rom. 11. *ledge of God !* 33.

I should now proceed to consider this matter more particularly, that the Grace of God is the Cause of the Word's being the Saviour of Life unto Life ——— by considering this Grace,

- I. *As a Cause*, with reference to God.
- II. *As an Effect*, with reference to Man.

I. As

1. As a *Cause* : So it may be consider'd partly as *efficient*, partly as *meritorious*, and partly as *instrumental*, and here must be consider'd four things as concerned (tho' not equally so) in the Word's being the Saviour of Life unto Life.

1. *Electing Grace*. The Doctrine of Election I firmly believe is according to Scripture : 'Tis certain that some that are not saved are called *the Elect of God*, as the whole Nation of the *Jews* throughout the Old Testament. 'Tis said that Jehovah had *chosen* them to be a peculiar People : So is the word (*Elect*) used by the *Prophets*, the Phrase may be traced throughout the Old Testament, as not refering so much to particular Persons, as to a *Church* in the general ; and thus the People of Christ are said to be (a) a *chosen Generation* ; but yet I am persuaded that particular Persons are *elected to Salvation*, thro' the *Sanctification of the Spirit, and Belief of the Truth* : To such the Word is the Saviour of Life. This Doctrine does not encourage Licentiousness, but promote Holiness, as Means and End are joined together, Sanctification and Salvation : And (b) no Person need puzzle and perplex himself by enquiring whether he is *elected* or no, and by saying he that is not *elected* can't be *saved* ; for the Scripture is plain, all that are *sanctify'd* shall be *saved* ; so that 'tis my Duty and Interest to look to that, and I may be then sure that I am *elected* if I am *sanctify'd*. 'Tis foolish to expect an Answer from

(a) τὸν ἐκλεκτόν. See Whitby.

(b) A Saying of Austin may be useful in such Debates, Melius est dubitare de occultis, quam litigare de incertis.

Heaven, when *one* is already given on Earth. If it be ask'd *who shall be saved?* Our Lord has given a full Answer, *He that believeth* (so as to keep his Commandments) *shall be saved*, and *he that believeth not shall be damned*. You need not look to the Decree of the Divine Will, when you have the Discovery of the Divine Word; by that we must be judged, by that therefore we should judge our selves: 'Tis vain to consult the Stars for our Security, when we have a clear Title by a recorded Law.

2. *Redeeming Grace*. Without this the Word could not be the Saviour of Life to any. Here the Death of Christ must be consider'd as a *redeeming Price*, and as a *justifying Plea*, and both as requisite and sufficient for this great End.

3. *Convincing and Converting Grace*. As the Blessed Spirit doth *make known the Word*, and ^{Prov. 1.} thereby produce Life in the Soul, that issues in ^{21.} eternal Life; and in order to that the *renewed Influences* of the Spirit must be consider'd both as *suitable* and *successful* in promoting the Divine Life, when it has discover'd the Word to the Soul as to its Authority, Spirituality, Importance, Propriety and Excellency, of which Persons before were in a great measure ignorant. 'Tis the Spirit gives inward Light and Life, the Word without him is but a *dead Letter*. Here may be consider'd, how the Spirit worketh Life in the Soul by the Word, the Mode of the Operation.

4. *Providential and Ministerial Mercy*. As to the Birth, Education, Circumstances, external Advantages of some, whereby the Word is more likely to prove Life: As the Children of Holy Parents well educated, and they

they that sit under an awakening Ministry, are more likely to be converted by the Word than others, which is providential Mercy to some, and does not in the least restrain the freeness and sovereignty of Divine Grace to any.

2. This Grace of God must be consider'd as an *Effect*, and so we must consider, 1. That by the influence of common Grace, Persons may and ought according to a *settled Constitution* do some things, without which they have *no Right and Reason* to expect the vital influence of the Spirit: They may come to God, using and attending on appointed Means, with serious Consideration, humble Confession, fervent Supplication, and firm Resolution, that the Word may be to them the *Savour of Life*. 2. When the Blessed Spirit has by the Word made them spiritually alive, 'tis requisite for them under the *Vital Influence* of the Spirit, to *exercise the Grace they have*, and grow therein, that it may be *Life unto Life*.

3. 'Tis as necessary that they *so exercise Grace*, as to live a Life of *holy Obedience*, and that both *Active and Passive*, as the State and Circumstance of Persons do admit or require: And

4. 'Tis as necessary that such do *persevere unto the end*, by the assisting Grace of God; by a *patient continuance in well-doing*, they must seek *Glory, Honour, and Immortality*, until they come

Rom. 2 7. *to the actual attainment of Eternal Life*. A Promise of Assistance is made to a good Beginning, but a Promise of Acceptance is only made to a good Ending, if they do these things, they shall never fail: without this whatever Life any may think they have under, or from the Word, it cannot according to a Gospel Constitution, be

be to them the *Savour of Life unto Life*. I only hint these things, because I am prevented by the number of Pages which are multiplyed beyond all Prospect; I shall therefore reserve these Considerations for a *Second Part*, if what has been written, shall prove so *acceptable as to be useful*, and the Great God shall give me ability and opportunity for further Improvements, whose I am, and on whom I depend.

C H A P. VIII.

T H E

A P P L I C A T I O N.

*Several Inferences of Truth and Duty,
drawn from the Consideration that the
Word is the Savour of Life unto Life.*

1. **I**F the Word be the Savour of Life unto Life, 'tis plain that it is highly reasonable to admire its *secret saving Power*. 'Tis not a dead Letter; for it giveth Life, the Life of Grace and Glory. 'Tis a *Vital Meen* by which immortal Souls are born again, when God grants a Door of Utterance, and gives a Door of Entrance. It is a *Transforming Meen* in the hand of a Redeemer; by looking into it, Persons are changed *from Glory to Glory*, and
P
by

by degrees obtain an Angelical Beauty : By it *all old things are done away, and all things are made new* ; it renews the Face of the Old-Creation, that was miserably defac'd and disgrac'd by Sin. How amazing is the Change, by the Power of God, when the Dead rise up, and walk in the Fear and Love of God ? The Brute acts like a Man ; a Devil, as to Sin, becomes as an Angel of Light ; and a Clod of Earth is rais'd to the Glory of a Star, that shall shine for ever in the *Right-Hand of Christ* ! Great indeed to admiration must this secret Power be, that scatters the thickest Darkness by victorious Light, subdues the most resolute Malignity by triumphant Love, purifies the unclean Heart from the most secret reigning Corruption ; brings down proud Reason to the Obedience of Faith, turns a Hawk into a Dove, a Lion into a Lamb, a Persecuting *Saul*, into a Beseeching *Paul* ; great is the Power that makes the Head clear, the Heart warm, the Spirit serious, the Hand ready, the Foot steady for the Service and Glory of a Redeemer ; that breaks the very Chains of Hell, pulls down the strong Holds of Satan, subdues all the usurping Powers of Darkness, and brings the Captive of Sin, into the glorious *liberty of the Sons of God*. This is the Blessed Instrument, tho' too often neglected and despised ; that enlightens the Mind with the Rays of Divine Knowledge, awakens the secure Conscience with an irresistible Call, inclines the perverse Will, and turns its bias for God and Heaven, raises and regulates the cold and wandering Affections, quickens the executive Powers, and at once makes the careless thoughtless Sinner cry

cry out, as one undone, *what shall I do to be saved.* This sacred saving Energy appears, and is felt sometimes in a *Moment*, it makes a change in some Degree, like that of the Resurrection, when in the twinkling of an Eye, Troops of enslaving Lusts, flee at the Voice of the Gospel-Trumpet, like a Flock of frightened Birds they hast away, and leave their long possessed Mansion; in a Moment the Iron Sinew has yielded, the stiff Neck bowed, and the hard Heart melted away in a Stream of Penitential Tears; such a mighty Work has been wrought by a *small part* of the Word of God, a single Sentence perhaps, like an unexpected Arrow, has enter'd the Heart, and fastned the Sinner to the *Door of the Sanctuary*; one plain Scripture, that has been often read and heard without care and concern, has on a suddain fill'd the Soul with Thought, put it upon restless Enquiries, and warm Endeavours, whereby it has given the *Body of Sin* a mortal Wound, and quickned the Soul with Eternal Life; a few Words prest home on the Conscience by the Apostle *Peter*, prickt the *Hearts of many to the quick*, and as few Words of Christ remember'd by him, made him *go out and weep bitterly*. And thus has many a hardned Sinner, a scoffing cursing Wretch, shewn himself in the Temple with a design to divert himself, and expose others; and there found that *the foolishness* of Preaching has made him *wise unto Salvation*. 'Tis certain that the Gospel hereby far exceeds the most refined Philosophy, it often performs that in many Souls, that the Wit and Wisdom of the most renowned Philosophers could never perform on

any ; their Lectures sometimes did allay the Passions, restrain some Irregularities, shape the Auditors for Conversation and Society, direct them to many things that had a tendency to promote their Health, their Quiet, their Interest and Honour ; but they did not *change* the Heart, inspire with Divine Love, qualify for Sacred Communion, raise the Man above himself, by regulating his Principles and Ends, and by fastning his Eye on *things unseen*, as most suitable to his Nature, adequate to his Wants, and lasting for his Enjoyment. The Philosophical Systems of the greatest Sages, wanted both Light and Heat, they did not fully direct nor quicken ; one may as soon find all the Rules of Architecture in a ruinous Building, as in all the Heathen Morality find sufficient direction for the *whole Duty of Man*. It has been observed to have been the Glory of Christianity (*a*) that whilst Philosophy was ineffectual in reducing the World to *Sobriety*, Christianity did exalt it to the *greatest Purity* : This is so certain, that even the Heathens themselves did confess it, and (*b*) Apostate *Julian* did urge the Example of Christians to provoke others to Love and Piety ; many thousands were reformed at a time, and that by speaking a *few Words*, that seem'd to carry nothing of Power and Demonstration with them. The Case indeed is much alter'd in this busy, secure, licentious Age, which wants *good Examples*, more than *good Precepts* ; the

(*a*) Origen. Con. Cels. Lib. 1. Plin. Ep. ad Trajan.

(*b*) Lactant. L. 3. c. 26.

Work of Conversion is a *rare Operation*, that few do experience, and few seriously desire. A *Shew of Religion* satisfies the present Generation, but the Power of the Gospel is the same, and if admired by us, would be more useful and comfortable to us. The Law it self, as 'tis the Power of God, tho' it has an aptitude to Convince, has not so great a tendency to Convert; the Flame in the burning Bush made the *Thorns more visible*, but did not consume them; the fiery Law discovers Sin, but 'tis only the power of the Gospel do's abolish it; the one may give the Frame and add some Colours, but 'tis the Gospel that conveys the Spirit and Life; Faith, Hope and Charity, are the vital Productions of the Gospel. This is the Word which God magnifies above all Things, Ps. 138.1 and so should all that either have received good, or desire to be improved by it; if we don't look into the Glass with an *admiring Eye*, 'tis not likely we shall be changed from *Glory to Glory*. 2 Cor. 3.18 And what do's deserve our Esteem and Admiration, if not that which is the *Saviour of Life unto Life*; Life is valuable, *Skin for Skin*, (or Skin on Skin) and all that a Man hath he will give for his Life; and are the Words of *Eternal Life* then to be despised?

Surely we must cease to call our selves *Men*, if we don't admire what is most admirable; and not pretend to *Christianity*, if the Bible is not esteemed above all Books, as that only brings *Salvation to the House*; shameful is the neglect of some, and impious is the contempt of others, who are more careful of an old *Manuscript*, or indeed of *common Paper*, than of these sacred Pages; when the Contents of this

blessed Book, like the Commandments, were wrote with the very *Finger of God*. According to *Story* (a) *Charles* the Great used to set his Crown on his Bible, as its greatest Support and Ornament; Christians in former times of all Ranks, preferr'd it to all their Valuables. King *Edward* the Sixth, when a Bible was put for him to stand on, when very young, with holy Indignation reproved the Person, saying, *it was unfit that he should trample that under his Feet, which he ought to treasure up in his Heart*: how did holy *Cranmer* and *Ridley* learn all the New Testament by Heart, as the most necessary concern ever to be remember'd; better forget our own Names, than forget our Bibles. Books of Prayer and Devotion are very useful, but the Bible is the *Book of Life and Death*, by which only all others must be approved or condemned. How dangerous is the Case of those who neither use a Bible or Prayer-Book, but a *Play-Book*, better they had been born blind, than to please the Eye with that which stabs the Heart; if the Play shuts the Bible, 'tis very likely it will shut the very Gate of Heaven against thee; I may say to such, as the Great God did, *Woe be to them that take Counsel, but not of me*. Holy *David* had able Counsellors no doubt, but yet he says of the Word, thy Testimonies are my Delight, and the Men of my Counsel; (b) they that consult this Oracle as they ought,

Esa. 30.

Psalm. 119.

(a) Fullers History of the Church.

(b) Stars are poor Books, and oftentimes do miss,
This Book of Stars lights to Eternal Bliss. Her. Po. p. 41.

can never mistake or miscarry : upon this account the Martyrs would part with their Blood, sooner than with their Bible ? How different a Spirit reigns in this Age ? How few do say, as pious *Herbert* often said with Solemnity, (a) That he would *not part with one Leaf of the Bible for the whole World, if it were offer'd him in exchange* ; he lookt upon it as the Book of Books, the necessary Food for Souls, the great Remedy for wounded Spirits, the Perspective of Heaven, the true Glass for Hearts to see their Beauty or Deformity, the great Magazine of Spiritual Arms, the Artillery of Heaven, the true Index of Eternity. Thus should we if we love our Souls, admire this inspired Book, none but Fools can despise perfect Wisdom ; 'tis not likely that any are in the way to Life, who don't look into the Book of Life. Let us search the Scriptures if we would be wise unto Salvation, in them only are the Treasures of Light and Life ; when we read or hear the Word, let us remember 'tis the Word of the Eternal God written or spoken, and surely the Law of Gods Mouth should be better to us, than thousands of Silver and Gold ; as the Operation of the Word is so very powerful, we may from thence conclude its Original is Divine ; Divinity alone belongs to it or none. Many undeniable Arguments might be produced to prove its Divine Original, but this at present may suffice, 'tis a Vital Word, that which raises the dead, must be from a Living God. Our Saviour's discovering Men's Thoughts,

Pf. 119.

72.

(a) *Herbert's Life.*

argued his Divinity, and the Words being a
 Heb. 4.12. *discerner of the Heart*, is an Argument for its Di-
 vine Authority, who can suppose that a *Lie*
 could be so operative and successful? the
 Instrument of so much Virtue and Goodness?
 what Word ever had such Trophies? what En-
 gine ever batter'd down so many strong Holds?
 must not that *be Divine*, that dispossesses Lusts
 and Devils? if the Lame walk, if the Dead
 are raised, if the Lepers are cleansed, 'tis easy
 to conclude that 'tis done with a Divine Com-
 mission, for 'tis above Nature, yea, contrary
 to it: All don't experience the vital trans-
 forming Power of the Word, but some of us
 I hope have felt it; to you I may say of it, as
 Rom. 1.16. the Apostle speaks of himself, *If I am not an*
Apostle, yet to you I am an Apostle.

2. If the Word is the *Savour of Life*, then
 the enjoyment of the Gospel is an *invaluable*
Blessing. Few do consider how great a Pri-
 vilege 'tis to be born in a Land of Vision,
 and not in a dark corner of the Earth, where
 Souls *perish for lack of Knowledge*; the Light of
 the Glorious Gospel of Christ is a much great-
 er Blessing than the Light of the Natural
 Sun, by the one we see our way through the
 Earth, by the other we see our way to Hea-
 ven; as the Gospel is the ministration of
 Light and Life, its Blessing is very compre-
 hensive and distinguishing; when it comes to
 Ps. 53. 10. a People, 'tis with a *design* of Mercy, as its
 continuance may issue in Salvation; for the
 Isa. 55. 11. *pleasure of the Lord will be accomplished, and his*
Word will not return empty. In every Place the
 Gospel was a *Savour* to some, the Blessed God
 by the great Apostle made manifest the *Sa-*
vour

your of his Knowledge in every Place ; the Word ^{2 Cor. 2. 14.}
 was fruitful at Corinth, for there God had much ^{Act. 18. 10.}
 People ; and 'twas not altogether fruitless at
 Athens, tho' some mocked, others believed, tho' ^{Acts 17.}
 not Men of Learning and Worldly Wisdom. ^{32.}
 If God sends John as a fore-runner, tho' the
 Pharisees don't believe, Publicans and Sinners ^{Matth. 21.}
 shall ; perhaps the Net of the Gospel is never cast ^{32.}
 in vain. 'Tis matter indeed of great Lamentati-
 on, that but few are converted in this degenerate
 profligate Age ; this has been the complaint
 of former Ages, that the Word did not al-
 ways do its full Work. Noah was a Preacher ^{1 Pet. 3.}
 of Righteousness to the whole World, and yet ^{20.}
 but a few saved from the Flood ; the Elegant
 Prophet complained, with a *Who hath believed* ^{Isa. 53.}
our Report ? The Learned Apostle declared, ^{1 Cor. 1.}
 that his Preaching to some was *foolishness*, and ^{23.}
 but few of all the Academy were converted, ^{Acts 17.}
 some disputed, and others mocked. ^{34.} *Hezekiah* ^{2 Chron.}
 sent Messengers to all Israel, but they were ^{30. 10.}
laughed to scorn ; and thus in this our day, few
 do consider the Things that belong to their Peace ; ^{Lu. 19. 42.}
 our Blessed Lord by his Word comes to his
 own, but his own receives him not ; the Word to ^{Joh. 1. 11.}
 many is but as a Tale that is told, and so tho'
 'tis the Word of Truth and Life, thousands
 do die with a Lie in their Right Hand ; but yet ^{Isa. 44. 20.}
 the Gospel its-self is not the less valuable, 'tis
 as the Tree whose Leaves cure the Nations : 'tis ^{Rev. 22. 2.}
 the great Instrument of God, that sanctifies
 and saves Immortal Souls ; for we are begotten ^{Jam. 1. 18.}
 of him by the Word of Truth, that we may be a
 kind of First-fruits of his Creatures. The Word
 of an Arch-Angel will raise dead Bodies, but
 'tis the Word of God that raises dead Souls ;
 the

the Providence of God may direct or restrain ; every Creature, may lead us to God as it discovers his Wisdom, Power and Goodness ; but 'tis the Word that giveth Life. There is not a *necessary* connexion between hearing and believing ; but yet *Faith comes by hearing*, the Word is appointed, and has been so blessed,

Pf. 19. 7. *to convert the Soul, to make wise the Simple, to rejoice the Heart, and enlighten the Eye : Bless God therefore for Gospel-Ministrations ; you have not so shining a Temple, as the Jews had, but you have the Spiritual Urim and Thummim, you have Light and Life ; and what can be more valuable ? Is it a pleasant thing to see the Sun ? how pleasant should it be to behold the Sun of Righteousness by vital Rays, making a Day of Grace, in which dead Souls may be quickned with Eternal Life ? If your Eyes are open, and your Hearts warm, you must say, the Gospel as it is sacred in its Appointment, gracious in its Tendency, and most merciful in its saving Effects, having a direct regard to an Immortal Soul, promoting your Eternal Salvation, is one of the best of Blessings. The Bread that comes down from Heaven, is unspeakably more valuable than our Daily Bread that springs out of the Earth ; crave a Blessing, and thankfully use it ; he that eateth thereof shall never die.*

3. It may be inferr'd, that this is the great Reason why the Word is so constantly and vigorously *opposed* by Satan. As the Devil is the great Enemy of Souls, he will always oppose that Word that giveth Life ; the tendency of which is contrary to his design on Men, which is nothing less than Death. The

Word

Word discovers his *Snares, Wiles, and Depths*, which enrages his Malice, and provokes his great Wrath, 'tis the great Spiritual Weapon to pull down his strong Holds; against this therefore will he engage his greatest Skill and Power: He tempts some to *disbelieve* it, tho' the Divinity of the Word is made clear by the opposition of the Powers of Darkneſs; he tempts others to *deſpiſe* it, tho' 'tis the Word of the Eternal God, by which they muſt be judged; he tempts others to *pervert* it by falſe Gloſſes, and baſe Interpretations, tho' the moſt neceſſary Truths are moſt plain and obvious to every obſerving Eye; He tempts others to *diſpute* it, and ſo turn chat into a Bone of Contention, which ſhould be conſider'd as Food to nourish Souls; He tempts others to *hide* it, that ſo Souls may *perish for lack of Knowledge*; he tempts others to *neglect* its Miniſtration, or if they do attend, he then tempts them to *diſreliſh* it, or if they like the Word, he continually tempts them to *live it down*, that it may loſe its *Credit* by the Licentiousneſs of its Profeſſors. His great endeavour is to prevent hearing, diſtract in hearing, or deceive by *hearing*, as he tempts many to think that nothing more is *neceſſary* to Salvation; and do's he not often *perſecute* the Diſpencers of Divine Truth, whereby he prevents the ſowing of the ſacred Seed? If that is not hinder'd, he will then ſow *his Tares*, that the Word may not be fruitful for the Salvation of Souls. When the Goſpel was firſt preached, it ſilenced the Oracles of Satan, and in its procedure it diſpoſſeſſ'd the ſtrong Man armed, dethroned the Prince of Darkneſs, narrow'd his

his Territories, and led Captivity captive, by translating Souls from Age to Age, from the Kingdom of *Darkness* into the Kingdom of *marvellous Light*; and therefore are all the Powers of Hell engaged against its further Progress and Success. Ministers and People should therefore do all they can, by Prayer, Meditation, Watchfulness, and active Endeavour, to disarm and disappoint Satan with all his cursed Confederates; who as the great *Deceiver* and *Destroyer*, is implacably engaged against the Word, as it do's promote *Purity* and *Peace* in the World, than which nothing is more contrary to his Hellish Kingdom.

4. If the Gospel is the Saviour of Life, we may conclude the *Patience* and Love of God is very wonderful in continuing so great a Blessing to those who neglect, despise, and oppose it.

The Gospel will be continued to the end of the World, so that the *Gates of Hell* (that is, its Policy and Power) *shall not prevail against it*; *It will say to the North, Give up; and to the South, Keep not back: It will gather Sons from far, and Daughters from the ends of the Earth.* Its Voice will be heard to the end of Time, the Golden Candlestick, with its shining Light, will sparkle in spite of Earth and Hell; many will puff at it, but none shall be able to extinguish it; but yet it may soon be removed from one Nation to another, in strict Justice, and with direful Vengeance. Vision may cease, and a Land be cover'd with spiritual Darkness. The peculiar People of God, distinguished by honourable Titles, high Privileges, and great Deliverances, may be abandoned by God as the

Genera-

Generation of his Wrath ; no spiritual Dew does Jer. 7. 29.
now fall on the Mountains of Gilboa ; Ichabod
is writ on the once famous Churches of Asia,
their Glory is departed, they are made as a
Place for Bats and Owls, and a Habitation for
Dragons. This may soon be the dismal Case of
other Nations, who abuse the Years of spiri-
tual Plenty, loath the heavenly Manna, im-
prison the Truth in Unrighteousness, and suffer not Rom. 1.
the Word to be a Light to their Steps, and a Lan- 18.
tern to their Paths. 'Tis fit to be remark'd, that Psal. 119.
when the Ark was put into the Temple, the 105.
Staves wherewith it was carried were not taken 1 Kings
out, to signify that the Blessing might be soon 18. 9.
forfeited, and the Ark as soon removed. Why,
O Lord, has not thy Ark been removed from us?
Why does not the Law perish from the Priest, and Ezek. 7. 6.
Counsel from the Ancient, so that we shall see no
Sign, and there shall be no more Prophets amongst Psal. 74. 9.
us ? Surely 'tis owing to wonderful adorable
Love ! How great is thy Long-suffering to
this ungrateful unfruitful People, a perverse
Generation, a Seed of Evil-doers ! Thy Go-
spel is the Blessing of Blessings, they that enjoy
it are said to be lifted up to Heaven, and they Matth. 10.
that want it are said to be without hope ; the re- 23.
moval of it therefore is of all the most dread-
ful Judgment. War, Famine, and Pestilence
are not such visible Marks of the Divine An-
ger ; when God takes away his Word, he says
Loami, not my People. Famine, of the three
forementioned Judgments, may be supposed
to be the greatest ; but a Famine of Bread is
not to be compared with a Famine of the
Word ; Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that Amos 8.
I will send a Famine in the Land, not a Famine of 11.
Bread,

Bread, and a Thirst for Water, but of hearing the Word of the Lord. When there is such a Famine, temporal Blessings are generally blasted at the same time, there is scarce any-thing left in a Nation but a *Curse*: What an invaluable Mercy is it therefore to have the Gospel continu'd, when the Hypocrisy, Luke-warmness, Prophaneness, and Apostacy of Professors are so visible and provoking? We in this Land have abundant reason to bless God, that we enjoy the Word in its *Purity* and *Power*; we are like *Gideon's Fleece*, moistned with heavenly Dew, when others are as the parched Wilderness; the Doors of our Temple and Sanctuaries are yet open, tho' we are descended from a Race of Pagan and Popish Idolaters, we are yet a *Goshen*, a Land of Light, a Place of spiritual Fatness; how kind is God to the Unthankful and Evil? We dye in Sin, and yet we have the Word of Life.

5. If the Word to some is the Saviour of Life, all should *attend* on it, and they who hear should *consider* this as their great End, and *encourage* themselves with the Hope of receiving so great a Blessing. Many neglect and despise the Means of Grace, Preaching to many is but *Foolishness*, tho' 'tis both the *Wisdom* and *Power* of God: How dreadful must the Account of such be in the great Day, who vilify the sacred Institutions of the Temple as mean and unnecessary, and thereby pretend to be wiser than the Deity, who knows our Wants, and appoints what is most apt to do us good! Let such Persons know, that the Alwise God has appointed *Hearing*, as the most proper mean to promote their Sanctification and Salvation:

To

To this only is the Promise made, *as Faith comes* Rom. 10.
by hearing ; and if such make light both of his ^{17.}
Wisdom and Goodness, he will soon make
them know, that the *Foolishness of God is wiser* 1 Cor. 1.
than Man. They shall hear the Word deliver'd ^{25.}
from the Throne, for by that they must be
judged, tho' they will not give it a hearing in
the Temple ; and then they shall tremble at
that Word, which now is but as a common
Tale , they that now *laugh* at the very Altar,
will *cry* then at the Bar for the *Mountains to co-* Rev. 6. 16.
ver them and the Hills to fall on them. 'Tis fit
for all in a *Day of Grace* to consider, that as the
first Insinuation of Sin was by the *Ear*, so may
be the first Inspiration of Grace ; as the Ear
was the Entrance of Sin, so it may be the *Gate*
of Life ; as in Heaven we shall know God by
Seeing , so on Earth we are to know him
by *Hearing*. The Conversion of *Manasseh* was 2 Chron.
wrought by the Words of the Seer ; *David* was 33.
reclaimed by the Ministry of *Nathan* ; the Eu-
nuch was instructed by *Philip*, and *Cornelius*
was directed to send for a Teacher ; the Jaylor
was awakened by the Apostle, and Thousands
in all Generations have been enlivened by the
Word of Grace. If you value your Life there-
fore, you must attend at the Posts of Wisdom's
Door ; attend constantly, don't miss one op-
portunity : The Absence of *Thomas* was to him
no small Inconvenience ; you may lose a Les-
son that might have given you Life, or en-
creased Strength and Comfort, when 'tis said
of you as 'twas of him, *and Thomas was not there.*
Let no private Concern prevent a constant At-
tendance on publick Worship, but let the Clo-
set prepare you for the Sanctuary. Let it be
your

Psal. 42.2. your Cry, as it was holy *David's*, *When shall I appear before God?* The Great God hath declar'd,
 Psal. 87.2. that *he loveth the Gates of Zion more than all the Dwellings of Jacob* : the Gates of Zion was the Place which the Lord had chosen to cause his Name to dwell ; for the Temple was built on or near to the Hill of Zion : This the Great God esteemed more than all the Dwellings of *Jacob*, tho' sanctify'd by private Devotion. 'Tis certain that the Blessed God is more glorify'd by publick Worship than private ; *in his Temple every one speaks of his Glory* ; when this is neglected, he complains as if he had *no Honour* from his People. The Presence of God is more to be expected in publick than private ; for *there is the Name of God recorded*, and he is said to be *in the midst of his People* : In the House of God are the brightest Discoveries both of Light and Love ; this made *David* say, *I pant and thirst for God, as the Hart panteth after the Water-brooks*. His Experience raised his Desire ; *I went*, says he, *into the Sanctuary of God, then understood I their End*. In the Temple is God *most wonderful in working* ; there he speaks Life to dry Bones, raises dead Souls out of the Grave of Sin, they are made to hear the Voice of the Son of God and live : There he gives Sight to them that are born blind ; there he speaks the word, and the diseased Soul is healed ; there he casts out the unclean Spirits, overthrows Principalities and Powers, pulls down the strong Holds of Satan, and leads Captivity captive. In the Temple is the brightest resemblance of Heaven, in which there is no *secret Devotion*, but all the Church of the First-born make up one general worshipping Assembly. To such Worship the greatest

greatest Promises (as has been already hinted) are made ; *Blessed is the Man that beareth me*, Prov. 8. *watching daily at my Gates, waiting at the Posts of my Door ; for whoſo findeth me findeth Life, and ſhall obtain favour of the Lord.* Whatever Experience any may pretend to, of the Power and Profit of private Devotion, it muſt not be prefer'd to publick Worſhip ; for Experience is not the Rule of Judgment, but the Word of God : Such Experience may only be upon ſome ſpecial Occaſions ; and it may be, the bleſſed Conſequence of publick Attendance, and publick Good, muſt be prefer'd to private Intereſt. Let not any therefore ask, *Are not* 2 Kings 5. *Abana and Pharpar better than the Waters of Jordan ?* The Waters of the Sanctuary are moſt apt to cleanſe and comfort thee : Diſpute not the matter when the Mouth of the Lord hath ſpoken it ; *Who art thou, O Man, that thus diſputeſt* Rom. 9. *againſt God ?* Private Duties are but as 20. Steps by which we aſcend to the Temple : Surely they are miſtaken miſerable Creatures, who prefer their private Eaſe to publick Worſhip ; who will not be at the pains to come to the Houſe of God, tho' nothing leſs than Life and Death depends on it ; every little thing is made a great Excuse. There are many prefer their worldly Buſineſs to the Solemnities of God's Houſe ; who will look into their *own Books*, inſtead of conſulting the *Book of Life* : And ſome prefer their Diversions to the Bleſſings of the Sanctuary ; theſe are *Deſpiſers of God*, whoſe *Jealouſy will burn as Fire againſt them.* Let ſuch Sinners conſider and tremble, that the *greatest Judgments* have been inflicted for ſome Miſcarriage about the publick Worſhip of God.

For this *Nadab* and *Abihu* were consum'd with Fire from Heaven : For this *Eli's* Family was utterly ruined : For this *Uzziab* was smitten with Leprosy, and *Uzzab* with sudden Death, and *Michal* cursed with Barrenness : Read this, all ye that forget God, and come constantly to his House, *lest he tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver you.* Under the Law they went many Miles, under the Gospel you need not take many Steps : Come, *that you may have Life ; the Priest's Lips do preserve Knowledge.* Life surely doth not only require your constant attendance, but *deserve* your earnest Desire, and raised Expectation, that by attending, you may receive the invaluable Blessings in the House of God : Therefore propose to your selves, as your End, *nothing less* than the receiving Spiritual Life, and the obtaining Eternal Life ; without this you desecrate the Ordinances, despise the Word, and are in the ready way to destroy your selves ; magnify the Word in your Thoughts, by serious Consideration, reverent Attention, fervent Supplication, close Application that it may be an effectual Mean to sanctify you here, and save you for ever. Worshipping Assemblies should be full of holy Ejaculations ; Lord let *this Word be Life to my Soul, quicken me by thy free Spirit,* let it, as 'tis the sword of the Spirit, prick me to the Heart, *that I may be made to cry out, Lord what shall I do that I may be saved ? I can't change my Soul, I can't turn and live ; Lord do thou turn me this Day, and I shall be turned, create in me a clean Heart, and renew a right Spirit within me :* Such Aspirations of Soul, such pious Breathings, may engage the Divine Spirit to fill the House with his

Acts 16.
v. 30.

Jer. 31.
v. 18.

Psal. 51.
10.

his Glory, and thy Heart with his Grace. Raise thy expectation, if thou wouldst receive the Blessing; look not on the Minister with a *censuring Eye*, but look up to thy God with a *craving Eye*. Thy Blessed Lord was comforted by an Angel, one vastly inferior to himself, and the *meanest Servant* of Christ may be a *Minister of God to thee for good*, if Prayer fills up the room of Prejudice: Thy Faith doth not stand in the *Wisdom of Man*, but in the *Power of God*; observe therefore the motions of thy Spirit, in the Sanctuary, *feel thy Pulse* often, that thou maist know whether thou art alive, and to what Degree Life is improved. Press the Word in thy Conscience; when you hear a *Command*, ask the Question, do I keep it, or am I willing so to do? When you hear a *Promise*, ask thy Soul, do's this belong to me, can I plead it, can I incourage my self by it? when you hear a *Threatning*, make the enquiry within, Lord, do I stand in awe and sin not? as you hear the *Joh. 11. 25* Word, put the Question to your selves, as Christ did to *Martha*, *I am the Resurrection and the Life*, *believest thou this?*

6. If the Word is the *Savour of Life*, it highly becomes all that hear it to examine themselves, that they may know, whether 'tis *Life or Death to them*. Most Persons are very forward to *censure* others, and very backward to *examine* themselves, their Eyes pry into the secrets of others, but seldom are turn'd inward to search their own Hearts: But few in the midst of a large Acquaintance, are *acquainted with themselves*, than which nothing *5.* can be more shameful, *know ye not your selves?*

Prov. 29.
18.

says the Apostle, *I speak it to your shame.* It must be a very Ignominious Character of any Person to be a Stranger at Home, ignorant of himself, for a Soul and Body to dwell together for many years, and yet not know each other; the matter is as dreadful in its Consequence, as 'tis shameful, for they that don't know God and themselves, must *perish for lack of Knowledge.* Let all therefore consider, that as 'tis fit for them to be self-acquainted, it must be necessary for them to *review and examine* their own Souls; they must *look within*, as well as *hear without*: it becomes them to possess their Minds with a due Sense of the very great Importances of *such* a review; for 'tis a *Trial of Spirits*, whereby the Soul is arraigned before the Bar of Conscience, and judged in the great concern of Life and Death: such a Trial is commanded by the Majesty of Heaven, the Authority of the Word you hear, obliges you to *examine your selves*, to *search your Hearts*, and *try your Ways.* As 'tis a matter of the highest Concern, so 'tis fit for you to consider, that if upon a regular Trial, you should find that the Word is not the *Savour of Life* to you, you have no reason to *distrust or despair*; for it *may* be Life to your Souls. As the day of Grace is continued, and as the Promise of the Spirit gives you sufficient encouragement, you are not excluded by *Name* in the Book of God, you should not therefore exclude your selves. If you should find upon Examination, that you are enlivened by the Word of Grace, the abundant Comfort that may arise from such a *Trial*, *will compensate* all your Pains, it will sweeten
all

all your Enjoyments, support you under all your Afflictions, quicken you in all Duties, 1 Pet. 1. 8. and prepare you for the greatest Blessings; it may fill *with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory*. But if you should *decline and defer* a Self-examination, you have no reason to think that you are *quicken'd* by the Word of God; to determine a matter without due Tryal, must be foolish and daring Presumption: This indeed is a common deplorable Case, Thousands are not better'd by the Word, because they take no pains to see *how bad* they are; they don't study their own Case, and so easily think they are so whole, as not to need a Physician. If any have examined themselves, yet there is *reason for frequent Self-reviews*; for 'tis Gal. 6. 3. *more than possible for a Man to think himself to be something, when indeed he is nothing, deceiving his own Soul*; 'tis good to be sure in a matter of Eternal Life and Death. By such Considerations as these, I would hope some at least, are inclined and resolved to try the Matter; let such Persons know for their Direction, that this Work must be carry'd on by *serious Consideration, fervent Supplication, and regular Comparison*. 'Tis not fit for them to compare themselves *with others* that are better than themselves; for they may be alive, and yet not be so strong as others: nor *with others that are worse than themselves*; for a Person may be better than others, and yet not be as good as he ought: nor *with himself*; for he may be better than he was, and yet not be as good as he should; but all such must compare themselves with the *Word of God*, which is the Great Rule of Duty, Expectation, and Judgment. By

that Sacred Rule it plainly appears, who are, and who are not made alive by the Word, (not *Lookers*, but *Lovers*) not they that look on Christ with the Eye of Profession, but love him with all sincere superlative Affection; *he that loveth not Christ more than all, is accursed, is not worthy of him*; (not *Talkers*, but *Walkers*) not every one that saith Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doth the Will of their Heavenly Father; that so name the name of Christ, as to depart from Iniquity; (not *Seekers*, but *Strivers*,) not they that seek by some feint Wishes, Resolutions, and Endeavours, but they that strive with vigorous Pursuits, and warm Application, for many shall seek to enter, but shall not be able; (not *Fainters*, but *Finishers*,) not they that so faint, as to be weary of well-doing, and so tho' they begin in the Spirit, do end in the Flesh; but they who do by a patient continuance in well-doing, go on seeking Glory, Honour, and Immortality; for without Perseverance, there can be no Salvation. Look, O Soul, on these four Rules, consider the matter well, and put the Question, am I alive or dead? and stay for an Answer: Has the Word Oh my Soul open'd my Eye to see that I was *once dead* in Sin, alienated from the Life of God? Has it prevailed with me, to renounce every thing *contrary* to the Will of God? Has it disposed my Soul, to make a *sincere surrender* of its whole self to God? Has it conformed me to the *Divine Nature* and Command, that I am ready to act for him, or suffer for him, preferring his Glory, and my own Salvation, before all the valuables of this World? Do's the Word rectify my Frame, that

'tis Serious and Spiritual ; and regulate my Life, is that Holy, and Useful? say to thy Soul, if I live, I breath ; do I breath after God? *pant for him, as the Heart after the Water-Brooks?* Do I move in the way of the Divine Commandments? have I Spiritual Senses exercised, that *I savour the Things of God?* Do I think and meditate on God with any degree of Delight? do I act with Sincerity and Constancy for the honour of God? By such Questions as these, you may know the State of your Case, if the Divine Spirit, who is ready to assist, do's shine Rom. 8. 16. on the Soul; the Blessed Spirit *must witness* 16. *with our Spirits, if we know that we are the Sons of God.* We may look on the Dial, but if the Sun do's not shine, we can't distinguish the hour of the Day; we may look into our own Hearts, and into the Word of God, but without the shining of the Spirit, we can't see the Point, as clear and certain. Pray therefore when you Pry, look upward when you are looking inward. By what has been said appears, that some Persons, tho' they hear the Word constantly, are not enlivened by it: Such as the Inconsiderate, the Infidel, the Malignant, and the Prophane, the Prayerless, Sensual, and Covetous, the Hypocrite, Slothful, and Apostate. It may also appear, that some are made alive by the Word; such as *love Christ above all, and live to him in and with all.* They who act from a *right Principle*, as Faith in 2 Cor. 4. 18. Christ, and Love to him; that are conversant 18. about proper Objects, looking to the things that are not seen; who act according to a fixed Rule the Word of God; and propose to themselves a Phil. 1. 21. right End, the Glory of God, may be assured that

that they are alive; *for to them to live is Christ, and to die will be gain.*

7. If the Word be the *Savour of Life* to some, pray with fervency and constancy, that it may be so to thy Soul. Let the *Eye* help the *Ear*, let *Prayer* help the *Preacher*; believe it O Soul, that the Word of God without, will not sanctifie and save without the Work of God within; the Word is the *ministration of the Spirit*, pray therefore for the Blessed Spirit, that by the Word, he may minister Life to thee. The Matter doth both deserve and require constant warm Supplication; without Prayer you are not to expect a Blessing, and without the Blessing you can't be saved. Many come to the House of God according to a Gospel Invitation; the *Table is furnished with Guests*, but for want of Prayer and Preparation, the provision of the Gospel do's not prove to them Bread of Life. Some come to the House of God as apprehensive of the excellency of the Christian Religion, and yet are but *almost perswaded to be Christians*: Some make their appearance as influenced by the *power of Education and Example*; they grow up in the Sanctuary like Plants in a Garden, whose Figure and Colour is owing to the Seeds from whence they were raised; the Religion of such runs in the Blood, they follow the fashion of their Family. Some come to the Temple out of *Novelty and Curiosity*, to hear some new thing; some come to gain *Respect* among a Party, some to promote their *Temporal Interest*, and some only to satisfy a *Natural Conscience*, without a sincere design and desire to receive Life from the *Word*; these don't pray for

Mat. 22.
10.

Acts 26.
28.

for a saving Blessing, and so don't profit by by the Word. Many there are that don't consider what Life is to be received from the Word, and so satisfy themselves without praying for the Spirit, without whose influence they must perish for ever. 'Tis very evident that many profess the Truth, and yet *imprison the Truth in Unrighteousness*; they are *publicly* Holy, and *privately* Wicked: the Religion of many lies only in *Notion*, in *Phrase*, and *presumed Orthodoxy*, they look more to the Head than Heart: and the Religion of many lies in *Talk*, the *Lip* is more than the *Life*; the Religion of others lies only in an *unblessed Zeal* for a Party, or in a *Spiritless outward Form*, or in a *partial Profession* and Performance. These Persons do not pray with fervency and constancy, that the Word may be Life to their Souls, a vital, nourishing, transforming, strengthening Principle: whatever are the Mistakes of such, the Word must change thy Heart, or it can't be Life unto thee; thy Soul must be transfigured by the Word, or thou art not made *wise unto Salvation*; a (a) *Heathen* could say, that *Man can't be wise, whose Mind is not transfigured by the Truth he learns*. 'Tis only the Divine Spirit can thus transform the Heart, impress the Word; pray therefore as for thy Life, that he would quicken thee with a *Vital Touch*, approach thy Spirit with his benign powerful Influence, that thou *maist awake to Righteousness and sin not*. Consider O Soul, what great Encouragement thou hast to expect the

2 Tim. 3.

15.

1 Cor. 15.

34.

(a) Nondum sapiens est, nisi in ea quæ didicit, animus ejus transfiguratus est, *Sen. Ep. 49.*

Spirit in the way of Prayer, thou canst not have greater to expect *Daily Bread*: The Spirit is Promised, and has not the Promise been *often fulfill'd*? and may it not as easily and suddenly be fulfill'd now? it has been given to *many*, and it was never deny'd *any Soul* that askt it in a right manner; there is not *one Instance* in the History of more than four thousand Years; is not this sufficient Encouragement? Is not God as much *engaged* by his Word to fulfil this Promise, as ever he was? He is as faithful as ever. Is not God as much

Mat. 7. 11. *inclin'd* to fulfill this Promise as ever? He is more willing to give it, than *our Parents can be ready to give good Things when we ask them*: Is not God as *able* to make good the Word on which he has caused thee to hope? His Arm is not shortned. And to say no more, is he not as much *glorify'd* now by giving his Spirit as ever? This as has been already mentioned is the *Great Promise*, most for God's Glory and thy Good; and will he give thee *Bread*, and deny thee that without which thou must perish for ever? O pray to him, and don't plead against him; Pray that *thou maist be taught of*

Pf. 119. 102. Heb. 8. 11. *God, that he would make known his Word unto thee, that thou maist see its Spirituality, Propriety, Importance and Authority, so as to be sanctify'd and sav'd by it*: Believe it O Soul, the most Learned and Eloquent Minister with all his Reason and Rhetorick, can't convert *one Soul*, without the Omnipotent Operation of God. The Servants of God like *Ezekiels Wheels* move not, except the *Spirit move them*, they are like Trumpets that can

1 Cor. 3. 6. *make no noise, unless they are breathed into*;

Paul

Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but God only gives the encrease. The Prophet Elisha cast ^{2 Kin. 2. 21.} Salt into the Waters, and then *there was no more death*; and so without the Influence of the Spirit, the Waters of the Sanctuary cannot cleanse and heal. Pray, therefore, *before* an Ordinance; say, To what purpose do I go, if the Lord goeth not with me? *At* an Ordinance say, Lord, what do I here expect, unless thou blest me? I cannot live by Bread alone, without the Blessing that proceedeth out of thy Mouth. When you *go from* an Ordinance, beg the Dew of the Spirit, that the Seed of the Sower may be Food to the Eater. Come to the Word of God with great Expectation, wait with close Attention, and then follow the Word with serious Meditation; let not needless Walks and diverting Visits turn off your Thoughts; if the Food does not stay, and the Physick work, Life can't be expected: Without Meditation and Supplication, 'tis not to be suppos'd that the Word will prove to be Salvation.

8. If the Word is Life by the Spirit of Grace, do not only pray for the Spirit, but ^{Eph. 4.30.} take heed you don't *quench the Spirit*; *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of Promise*. When you hear the Word, say as the Children of Israel did to ^{Deut. 1.} Moses, *The thing which thou hast spoken is good for us to do*; that will please the Spirit of God, and thereby promote Life and Salvation. Doing is better than knowing: *Happy are ye if ye* ^{Joh. 13.17.} *do them*. There is not one Promise made to Knowledge without Practice in the whole Book of God. The Precept and Promise are joined by the Hand of Grace, to prevent both
Pre-

Presumption and Despair : without a due regard to both, we can't avoid quenching the Spirit. A Fire is quenched, either by removing the Fuel that did excite it, or by putting on the contrary Element that is most apt to extinguish it : So is the Divine Spirit quenched, by *not doing* those things that do promote sacred Influence, or by *doing* those things that do prevent it ; the one is done by Omission, the other by Commission. Every Sin does

Psalm. 4. 4 *grieve* the Spirit ; but deliberate, wilful, heinous, repeated Sins do *quench* it. *Stand in awe*, therefore, O Soul, *and sin not*, lest the Spirit of God abandon thy Soul, and leave it either dead or languishing. This Judgment above all is to be dreaded and deprecated ; the Psalmist

Psal. 51. 11. apprehended it so, when he cry'd out with the utmost Importunity, *Lord, take not thy Holy Spirit from me* : He was not concern'd for his Crown and Sceptre, his Royal Glory and Grandeur, if compared with the Influence of the Divine Spirit. If a Prince, one of the greatest in the whole World, shall tremble at the thought of being forsaken of God ; Subjects should fear, lest by repeated Sin they provoke the blessed Spirit to retire, without whom they can't live, but must perish for ever : The Word read or heard will be a *Killing-Letter* ; instead of saving them, it will judge them to an eternal Hell : Let this therefore be the tender Point. *Take heed to your selves*, that you don't quarrel with the Holy-One, and that you make up every Difference without delay by Repentance, or else your Life must go for it :

Prov. 38. 6. He that thus sinneth against God *wrongeth his own Soul* ; and he that hateth him, loveth Death :

Death : not to live to the Spirit is not to love their Life, but to chuse Death.

9. If the Word is a Savour of Life to any, it becomes them thankfully and joyfully to *adore* the Grace of God. We should give thanks for the Word, as it is the Seed of Life ; but more thankful we should be, if that sacred *Seed remaineth in us*. We should bless God for the Word of his Grace, as 'tis an invaluable Blessing ; but surely our Mouths should be full of the Praises of God, if it be to our Souls an ingrafted Word. Our Cry should be with the Psalmist, *Because thy Loving-kindness is better than Life, therefore shall my Lips praise thee*. Ascribe Psal. 63-3. Glory to God in the Highest, Father, Son, and Spirit : Had not the Father order'd the glad Tydings to be publish'd ; had not the Son tabernacled amongst Men, to teach them, and dye for them ; and had not the blessed Spirit both indited and imprest the Word, you had this day been *dead in Trespasses and Sins*. 'Tis Eph. 2. 1. Grace, glorious Grace, that gives Life to any ; a Revenue of Praise is therefore due to the Riches of Divine Grace : you are thankful for Health and Strength, for Liberty and Leisure, for Peace and Plenty, for Riches and Honour, for the Corn, the Oyl, and the Wine of this World ? these indeed are Mercies, but not of the right hand ; these you may enjoy and yet die, and perish for ever ; above all things therefore give thanks for *Spiritual Blessings in high places in Christ Jesus*. If the Creator is more excellent than the Creature, if an Immortal Soul is more valuable than a Perishing Body, an unthinking Clod ; if Eternity is a longer duration than uncertain passing Time, if the ineffable

ble Glories of an Eternal Heaven are brighter than the Shadows of the Vale of Tears; if the Eternal Agonies of the Damned are more grievous than the Sighs of guilty Mortals, which in comparison are but for a *Moment*, then the Word of God as 'tis to you the Saviour of Life, should raise your Praises to the highest Key. 'Tis a Mercy indeed that you *are alive*, but how much greater is it that you are *Alive to God*, when the greatest part of Mankind are Dead in Sin, as Alienated from him, and condemned by him. This is a distinguishing Mercy; do not therefore with the

Lu. 17. 18. Lepers, *forget to give God thanks*. How dull and heavy soever your Hearts may be now, this, this single comprehensive Mercy will raise your Joy, and tune your Praises throughout the endless Revolutions of Eternity. This is the noble ravishing Theme of the *Spirits of Just Men made perfect*. Adored be the Grace of God for ever, that made me to differ! Blessed be the Lamb that was slain, to the Value and Virtue of whose Blood I owe my Crown of Glory! And should not you who are in sight

Heb. 12. 22. and hope, *come to Mount Sion, to the City of the living God, and to an innumerable Company of Angels*? As you are enlivened by the Word, join in with the glorious Quire above, in ascribing

Rev. 5. 13. Honour, Glory, and Praise, to him that sitteth on the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever and ever. How many dead Souls, how many dead Families are to be found every where? and art thou, O my Soul, quickened by the free Spirit? adored for ever be the Riches of Divine Grace, that made me to differ! I was as dead as any, but the powerful *Ephata* has been pronounced,

and

and I arose from the Grave of Sin. God said Let there be Light, and there was Light ; Let there be Life, and there was Life ; and I rose up as a *New-Creation* before him : he hath pronounced *it good*, let me declare *him blessed*. 'Tis he hath made me to differ from *Apostate Angels*, who never heard the Gospel-Sound ; never was it said to them, Be ye saved ! 'Tis he that made me to differ from the *Blind Heathens*, who are said to be *without Christ, and (so) without Hope*. Eph. 2. 12. 'Tis he hath made me to differ from *Common-Professors*, who have Light but not Life. 'Tis he hath made me to differ from my *very Self* ; whereas I was once blind, now I see ; once dead, am now alive ; once was lost, am now found. Blessed, for ever blessed be the Name of the Lord ! Blessed be that Eye that pitied me, that Breath that enlivened me, that kind Arm that took hold of me, and translated me into the Kingdom of marvellous Light. 'Tis remarkable, that but *One in Ten* gave God thanks ; our Necessities *drive* to God in Prayer, but our Enjoyments too often *draw* us from him. But after all, Thanksgiving is the most ingenuous part of all Devotion, that which most becomes a Soul made alive to God : 'Tis free from Self-Interest, and 'tis the most proper Tribute we can pay to our great Benefactor. How skilful in this matter was the great Apostle ? How frequently does he make mention of the Name of Christ with adoring Thankfulness ? How do's he ascribe his All to the Grace of God ? And should not we be Followers of him, if we have *obtained Mercy* ? O monstrous Ingratitude ! O vile Injustice ! O shameful Disingenuity ! not to return in
Praise

Praise what thou hast received without the *Merit* of a Prayer ! 'Tis said of the Apostle *Paul*,

Acts 9. 7. that he heard a Voice, when others only heard a Sound of Words : This is thy Case, thou hast heard the enlivening Voice of God, when other Hearers in all Sermons, have only heard a Sound of Words. Let thy Voice therefore bless the Lips of the Living God, who spoke to thee the Words of eternal Life. The Eu-

Acts 8. 39. nuch when he was instructed, went his way re-

Acts 2. 46. joicing ; they that were converted did eat their Meat with Gladness of heart, and shall I be sullen and silent ? If I am converted, the Day of my Birth, the Day of Espousals, the Day of Harvest, the Day of Coronation, the Day of Triumph, is but as the dismal shade of a Winter-Night, if compared with the Day of Conversion : then it was that *I began to live* ; let all my Days therefore, in remembrance of it, be Days of Thanksgiving.

10. Is the Word the Saviour of Life to any, such Persons should live to God, and then rejoice in the hope of the Glory of God. If any are made alive to God, it is that they may act for and live to him in all holy Obedience. The Obedience he requires from such, according to his Command, must be sincere, we must obey

Eph. 6. 5. him with singleness of heart, and serve him with

Rom. 7. 6. newness of spirit ; what we do must be heartily,

Col. 3. 23. as unto the Lord. It must be entire as to all our

Mark 12. 30. Parts and Powers ; we are to love him with all our heart, all our soul, and all our strength. It

must be universal as to the Rule ; we must have

Pf. 119. 6. a regard to all the Commandments of God, if we would not be ashamed. It must be diligent, we

Rom. 12. 11. must not be slothful in Business, but fervent in Spi-

rit,

rit, *-serving the Lord.* It must be *cheerful*; God loveth a cheerful Liver, *his Commandments are* 1 Joh. 5. 3 *not grievous*, it must therefore be *our Meat and our Drink to do the Will of our Heavenly Father.* It must be *constant*; *By a patient continuance in well-* Rom. 2. 7 *doing, we seek Glory, Honour, and Immortality, till we attain eternal Life.* This is the Life of Obedience that the blessed God requires from those he has *quickned* by his Word; such should therefore charge it on their Consciences, and consider it in all its Parts, so as to improve it ——— Consider, O converted Soul, what sort of Life thou hast from God, and must employ for him! 'Tis a Life of *Faith*; live therefore *by Faith in the Son of God*, above the Gal. 2. 20 *Smiles or Frowns of a tempting or threatening World.* 'Tis a Life of *Love*; *keep thy-self then in the Love of God*, in his Love to thee, so as Jude 21, *not to forfeit it*; and in thy Love to him, so as not to extinguish it. 'Tis a Life of *Holiness*; *shun therefore the appearance of evil, perfecting Holiness in the fear of the Lord.* 'Tis a Life of *Li-* 2 Cor. 7. 1 *berty*; the Son hath made you free, let not the Law Rom. 7. *in the Members make you captive to the Law of Sin* 23. *and Death.* 'Tis a Life of *Watchfulness* and *Prayer*; *watch therefore and pray always, that* Mat. 26. *you may not be overcome with evil, but may over-* 41. *come evil with good.* 'Tis a Life of *Converse*; Rom. 12. *let your Fellowship be with the Father, and with his* 1 Joh. 1. 3 *Son Jesus Christ.* 'Tis a Life of *Usefulness*; for- Heb. 13. *get not therefore to communicate*; whatever Tem- 16. *ptation you are assaulted with, remember that Charity is the only thing mentioned in the so-* Mat. 25. *lemn Account given of the Day of Judgment*: 'tis mentioned as the fulfilling of the Law. Rom. 13. Again, 'tis a Life for *Growth*; *grow therefore* 10.

- 2 Pet. 3. *in Grace, exercise your-self to Godliness, and then*
 18. *rejoice in the hope of the Glory of God. As you*
 1 Tim. 4. 7. *have one Life in this World, you are assured*
of another in a better. Grace is Glory in the
Bud ; from the Seed you shall reap the Har-
vest ; the Dawning of the Morning secures
the Glory of the eternal Day. Rejoice there-
fore, and be exceeding glad ; endear a Re-
deemer to your Soul, and exalt him in your
Thoughts, by the believing View of approach-
ing Felicity : Realize the eternal World, set
it in view, and make it present, by that Faith
 Heb. 11. 1. *that is the evidence of things not seen, and the sub-*
stance of things hoped for ; and then all your
Trials and Troubles in this sinning fighting
World, all the Evils that you feel or fear, will
not much sink your Spirit, but the Joy of the
Lord will be your Strength. As you are alive
to God here, so you shall live with God for
 2 Cor. 4. *ever ; and your light Afflictions which are but for a*
 17. *moment, will work out for you a far more exceeding*
and eternal weight of Glory. God will save you
in due time, and help you in the mean time, and
make you happy to all eternity.

C H A P. IX.

Four Inferences drawn from the Consideration, that the Word to some is the Saviour of Death unto Death.

II. **I**S the Word the Saviour of *Death unto Death* to some, a few things I shall infer from that melancholy Consideration.

I. The Ministry of the Word must be of all Concerns the most *awful* and *important*. What can be more tremendous than *Eternal Death*, and more concerning than *Eternal Life*? Nothing less than this is the *Import* of the Gospel-Ministry, the *Burden* of every Sermon, the *Message* of every Minister: Good God! how little is this consider'd in a degenerate trifling Age! A Minister is a Person in the prophane Judgment of many the *least needed* of any; his Pay is envied, his Preaching despised, and his Office not only ridicul'd but nullify'd by too many, who at the same time are mighty zealous in writing and talking of *The Rights of the Christian Church*; they can put a Christian Title to any Book, to desecrate what is most sacred, make void what is most necessary, and represent as a *meer common Trifle*, what by the very *signature* and *inclosure* of the Almighty is unalterably fix'd, as the very continuance of the World, most peculiarly firm and important. Whatever *Sense* such Persons may pretend to, 'tis certain they want *Seriousness*, when like a *Most Christian King*, they pull down the Altar, and enslave the Priest, the bet-

ter to promote true Religion. Let the prophane Wit, and unhallow'd Breath of any dare or despise the Ministry, the Office is not less sacred, nor its Concern less important. As long as *One Bible* is continued in the World, the Commission may be read; and when read, the Priest is secure against the Censure and Calumny of envenom'd Tongues and Pens, by the Broad-Seal of Heaven. As a Judge of Life and Death, duly authorized, is guarded against all the Attempts or Reproaches of daring Criminals: The Office of the one, is not less important or necessary than the other, the *great Thought* of the *awful Consequence* of Gospel Ministrations, made the Apostle cry out, *who is sufficient for these things?* That is, (a) (as the Word signifies) who is *Worthy*, and who is *Fit* for so great an Enterprize. The serious Spirit of the Apostle was deeply struck with an awful Sense of the greatness of the Work, upon which Events of the greatest Importance did depend, his Thoughts were very sincere and solemn; let others *trick or trifle* at their Peril, a humble Sense of Mans unworthiness, and a deep Apprehension of the Difficulty and Consequence of the Ministerial Work, most *highly becomes* all that design for, or are engaged in the Sacred Office; a serious affecting conviction of the Dignity and Difficulty of the Ministry, is as *useful* as becoming. (b) This will *direct* to the Throne

(a) Τίς ἱκανός;

(b) *A very serious Discourse of Dr. Williams lately printed, may be read with Profit, concerning the Great Importance and Difficulty of the Ministerial Office.*

of

of Grace for constant Guidance and Assistance, Success and Acceptance ; this will *fix* an entire dependance on Jesus Christ, the *Great High-Priest set over the House of God*, for renewed Light, Love, and Power : This will *make* Persons duly solicitous about the concerns of Immortal Souls: This will *preserve* from many Sins, which obstruct the saving tendency of Gospel Ordinances : This will *prevent* such a profuse Expence of some, as is injurious to Preachers and Hearers, and *quicken* the active Powers, that they may be regularly, vigorously and constantly employed in the Great Salvation. When any that labour in the Word and Doctrine, have such a due Sense of the consequence of their Work, 'tis a *sign* they have *high Thoughts* of God, a *firm Belief* of the Eternal World, a *due Love* to Souls, a *tender Conscience*, and an *earnest Desire* to be useful for the Glory of the Redeemer, looking more to their *Preaching* than their *Pay*; than which nothing is more Necessary and Ornamental in a Gospel Minister : And if any are not so affected as the Great Apostle was, their Office is a *Snare*, and may be a *Curse* ; it proceeds from Criminal Causes, and is likely to produce the most dreadful Effects ; such are not likely to do much good, but rather much hurt ; for they don't consider the Great God whom they personate, *praying Men in Christ* 2 Cor. 5. *stead to be reconciled*: They don't consider for ²⁰. what *Great Purposes* they are invested, intrusted, and employed ; they don't consider the *Nature of their Work*, which is Spiritual, Extensive and Difficult ; they don't consider what *Great Things* depend on their successful Management,

ment, as the Glory of God, the diffused Virtue of a Redeemers Blood, the recovery of Souls from Sin and Satan, the enlightning and rectifying a dark disorder'd World, the preventing Death, and promoting Eternal Life; neither do such Persons consider the *value of Souls* for whom they are employed, the *Opposition* they may meet with in the faithful discharge of their Duty, the many *Weaknesses and Infirmities* of their Flesh and Spirit: if Persons duly consider these things, they would often cry out, *who is sufficient?* yea, did they only look on the amazing Consequence of the Work, as represented by the Apostle, that to every Soul the Word is a *Vital or Mortal Odour*, they would soon see the need of the Strength of a Redeemer, and the Joys of the Holy Ghost for their Success and Comfort.— Is it not melancholy to think that the Word may be Death to the *Preacher*, when 'tis Life to the *Hearer*? *Israel* may be gather'd, and he may be an *Eternal Cast-away*; the Word of Life that comes out of his Mouth, may condemn him to Eternal Death; it will be so with every Unfaithful, Slothful, Sensual, Worldly Minister, the Word that he preaches will *judge him*, the sacredness of his Office will *highten* his Guilt, and his mis-improved Advantages for Knowledge and Holiness, will add *bitterness* to his Death. How dreadful is it to think, that that Mouth that spoke Salvation, will be stopt in Eternal Confusion; that what the Hand wrote from time to time, was only a *dead Warrant* signed for his own Execution. 'Tis beyond all Expression terrible, to think that the *faithless Preacher* will one day

day appear as a *furious Devil*, blaspheming God, and cursing himself, as having kill'd himself with a Word of Life. Scripture tells us, as a warning to all slothful, sensual Servants, *when their Lord cometh, he will cut them a-* Mat. 24.
sunder; the Priest shall be cut down, as the Sa-^{51.}
 crifices under the Law were, and so shall be made a Sacrifice to Eternal Vengeance. This is a very melancholy Consideration, but 'tis much more *awful* to consider, that Preacher and People may perish together: How uncomfortable a Concern is it, for Ministers to see their Labour lost, as Souls continue dead under the means of Life? To spend their *Strength* for nought, to cry out with the Prophet, the *Bellows are burnt, the Lead is consumed, and the* Jer. 6. 29.
Founder melteth in vain; and to say, who hath believed our Report, and to whom is the *Arm of* Isa. 53. 1.
the Lord revealed? What a frightful Spectacle is an *Assembly languishing in Sin*? waxing worse and worse, under a Dispensation of Light and Love, dying away in Iniquity, gasping over a Grave, dropping into an Eternal Hell? With what fervency should Ministers Preach and Pray, that so dreadful a Curse may be prevented? How dismal a sight is it to see some *sleeping* under the Word, and others *trifling* with the Word, when 'tis Life or Death, and *by it* in a few Moments they must be adjudged to an Eternal Heaven, or an Everlasting Hell? And yet how common a Sight is a *Soul dead in Sin*? How little Life doth shew it self in the common Crowd? How many dead Families are there in a Land of Light; we read that in *Egypt* there was a great Cry, for there was not an *House* Exod. 12.
where^{30.}

where there was not one dead. Lord, how many Houses are filled with dead Souls! what a Cry should this raise in our *Israel*? How should Ministers weep, and People sigh over thee Spiritually dead, and pray that God would say to them, *Arise and walk*. This is the Wound and Weight that makes the faithful Servants of Christ groan in secret, and cry out, Lord, *who is sufficient?* After all endeavours, to behold so many dead and dying Souls, to see after the vast expence of the Love and Labour both of God and Man, Souls lost at once; nothing can support under it but this, that *though Israel*
 Is. 49. 5. *be not gather'd, their Reward is with God, and they*
 2 Cor. 2. 15. *may be a sweet Savour in them that perish.*

2. Is the Word the *Savour of Death* to some; this speaks *Terror* to the *careless* Hearer: Some Persons take little care *when* they hear, or of *what* they hear, as if it signify'd little whether they were saved or damned; as if Eternal Life and Death were *meer Words*, empty Sounds, insignificant Cyphers: Surely this their Way is their folly; had they a bright view of the Glory of Heaven, and the Horror of Hell; and did they see Immortal Souls passing from worshipping Assemblies on Earth, into the Eternal State, and there fixt as they heard and lived, either in a State of endless Felicity, or everlasting Misery; Did they thus consider that both Heaven and Hell are peopled from Day to Day with *careful* or *careless* Hearers, it were impossible for them to appear before God in his Sanctuary, without *Care* and *Caution*: some are too *curious*, but most are too *careless*, not thinking that Sermons will issue in Life or Death. When
 Moses

Moses would engage the attention of the Israelites, he said to them, set your Hearts unto Deut. 32. all the Words which I testify among you this Day, 46.

'tis not a vain thing for you, because 'tis your Life : Life can't be Vanity ; not to attend is Death ; Lord, how few believe it ! how few are affected with it ! how few are afraid lest by neglect they should die under the Word.

(a) It was generally agreed by the Heathens, that the Gods were not to be worshipt in a careless manner, and it was a Custom among some, when they began to sacrifice, to have these Words pronounced that all might hear,—*Mind this* — : What need is there to have such a *Voice sound* in Christian Assemblies, to awaken the Drowzy, and unite the scatter'd Spirits, to open the flumbring, and fix the wandring Eyes ; the Case of such must be very dangerous, who are dying, and yet are thoughtless of Death, and yet how common a case is it ? Education and Custom, Worldly Policy and Profit, have a mighty Influence on stated Worship, whereby Persons satisfy themselves with an outward Appearance, without any serious Consideration of the *Important Consequence* of the Word of God : They put the Great God off with a little Bodily Exercise, which of it self profiteth but little ; but few in a numerous Assembly are intent on Salvation, but few stir up themselves to take hold of Isa. 64. 7. God, but few do worship God with that Sin-

(a) Plutarch. EI~ was inscribed on the Delphick Temple, (as the Name of God is, I am) to promote Reverence, intimating, that the Being worshipt was necessary Existence, but the Being worshipping, was not, or was meer Vanity.

cerity

cerity and Seriousness as becomes *dying Creatures*, passing into great Eternity; the Son of God compared some Hearers to the *Ways-side*,

Luke 8. 5. where the Seed was trod under Foot, and the Fowls of the Air devoured it; too many Hearers are like the High-way, beaten with the Feet of common Passengers, so that the Seed do's not stay, but vain Thoughts, like the Fowls of the Air, soon devour it. Some Persons won't hear at all, though the Scripture tells them, that *Faith comes by hearing*; to such it may be said as Moses

Acts 3. 23. did to the Fathers, a Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your Brethren like unto me, him shall ye hear in all Things, whatsoever he shall say unto you; and it shall come to pass, that every

Deu. 18. 15. Soul which will not hear that Prophet, shall be destroyed from among the People. This must be daring contempt of the Deity, when Persons will not so much as give him a hearing, tho' their very Life depends on it: This must expose to wrathful Vengeance, which no private Devotion is ever likely to prevent; for he that

Pro. 28. 9. withdraws his Ear from hearing the Law, his Prayer shall be an Abomination. The Blessed God to shew the greatest Compassion to perishing Sinners, sent his Son to be a Priest, requiring dying Souls to hear him, and live, and yet will many not hear but die. He had sent many Servants before, at last he sends his own Son, well might he say, surely they will Reverence him; but alas, little Reverence is shewn him in this Apostate World, tho' 'tis plainly declared,

Matth. 21. 37. that he that hath the Son hath Life, and he that hath not the Son, hath not Life; he himself is neglected, and his Servants despised, and the Case of such must be very dreadful; for the Master

fter of those Servants *will come, and miserably* Matth. 21.
destroy those wicked Ones. They that will not ^{41.}
hear Christ as a Saviour, saying, *turn and live,*
will one day hear him as a Judge, saying, *go*
ye Cursed; and they that hear without due
Attention and Application, will not live by it;
Death will seize them at last. Oh that there-
fore when we hear, we may ask as Philip did
the Eunuch, *understandest thou what thou readeſt?* Act. 8.30.
We may with Mary *keep the sayings,* and pon- Lu. 2. 19.
der them in our Hearts; we may with holy Da- Pf. 119. 11.
vid, *bide the Word in our Hearts,* that so we may
not ſin againſt God; and then we shall not only be Jam. 1. 25.
bearers of the Word, but doers, and ſhall be bleſſed
in our Deeds.

3. Is the Word the Saviour of Death to ſome,
this ſpeaks Terror to thoſe who have ſat long
under the means of Grace, and yet are not *con-*
vinced and converted by the Word. The caſe
of ſuch Perſons is very *dangerous,* though not
deſperate; they have reaſon to fear, but not to
deſpair; they muſt not neglect the Means, or
diſtruſt the Bleſſing, becauſe they have not
yet received vital Influence; but they muſt
conſider what Sin has provoked God to ſuſ-
pend his Grace, what Omiſſion or Commiſſi-
on has grieved the Bleſſed Spirit; and repent
of that, and return to God in the exerciſe of
Faith and Hope, through the Blood of a Re-
deemer, pleading as becomes perishing Crea-
tures with the utmoſt Importunity for that
quickning Influence, without which they muſt
die; and then they muſt *wait on God* in the
uſe of appointed Means and Methods, not li-
miting him as to *Time* or *Manner;* but leaving
the matter with him, who is the greateſt Lover
of

of Souls, ready to shew Compassion to them. They that have appeared *long* in the House of God, and yet are not the *better* for it, are most certainly the worse, if the Word don't soften it hardens; they should therefore bethink themselves, and consider their danger with the greatest seriousness, while the Day of *Grace lasts*, as nothing less than Eternal Life or Death depends on it. Let such but put the case as to their Bodies, and they may soon see reason enough to be greatly concerned for their Souls; if there was but *one Medicine* appointed by God for the recovery of Health, and that had been *often and long* applyed without Success, so that after all, the Flesh decay'd, the Spirits failed, the Breath shortned, surely they would look on that Man as in a very *dangerous Condition*: The Word of God is the *only appointed Medicine* for the recovery of diseased Souls, no other Remedy is ever like to be used or blessed; and if thou hast in the House of God thirty or forty Years heard this Word, and yet art not sanctify'd by it, thou hast reason to *tremble*, lest thou shouldst die in thy Sins, and so perish for ever (a). The long unsuccessfulness of Means, renders the Man less capable of receiving good from them, and the less likely he is to receive Good, the greater reason he has to fear the greatest Hurt. God indeed may convert the Soul by some *awakening Providence*, he may turn the Heart by the immediate *vital touch* of his Spi-

———(a) Frustra Medicina paratur,
Cum mala per longas invaluere Moras, Ovid.

rit, yea, he may if he please send an *Angel* to persuade the Sinner ; but yet to expect this, when *apt sufficient* appointed means are neglected or prevented, is *daring Insolence*, and most *dangerous Presumption*. If Food and Physick don't refresh and relieve the Body, 'tis in vain to hope that a *Seraphim* will prove a *Physician* ; a *Miracle* is not to be expected when the offer'd Mercy of God is sufficient. Consider therefore O Soul, what effect the Word of God has had on thee ? art thou *hard* under the *droppings* of the Sanctuary ? art thou *shapeless* notwithstanding all the *hewings* of the *Prophets* ? art thou unperswaded and unaffected by the *loud Voice* of the Law, and *soft Voice* of the Gospel ? Awake, stir up thy self, *call up-* Joh. 1. 6
on thy God, for the Breath of thy Nostrils may stop this *Moment*, thy Sun may set *this Noon*, thy Soul may be required of thee *this Night*, if the *Day* of Nature should not end, the *Day* of Grace may, the provoked Spirit may retire, and thy Soul be left for ever desolate. Tremble at the thought of *changing Worlds*, before thou hast *chang'd Wills* ; it had been better ten thousand times over, thou hadst never been born, than to die and not be *born again* by the Word of Truth. I *charge* thee therefore in the Name of God, and *beseech* thee in the bowels of Jesus, to consider thy Danger, to deprecate this Judgment, to supplicate for Mercy ; cry out, Lord *save me*, Matth. 14.
or I perish ; for there may be but one Breath ^{30.} between thee and Death.

4. If Sin through the Temptation of Satan, is the cause of the Words being the *Savour of Death*, it becomes all to *justify* God, and beware of
of

of Sin. It becomes all that hear the Word to *justify God*, for he is not the *immediate efficient Cause* of the Death of Souls, he do's every thing *becoming himself*, to *prevent* their Damnation, and *promote* their Salvation. Consider O Soul *what he has done*, and what he is *willing yet to do* for thee! has he not declared *good will to Men*; that his *delights are with the Children of Men*; has he not *sworn that he delights not in the death of a Sinner*? Has he not *sent his only Son* to be a Saviour by his innocent Life, and meritorious Death? has he not *wrote a Book*, as it were with his *own Hand*, that thou maist have sufficient direction what to do, that thou maist be saved? Has he not *sent forth* his Ministers to argue the matter with thee, to warn thee of the Danger, to awaken thee to due thought, that thou maist not perish? Has he not *sent his Spirit* to enlighten, convince, and convert thy Soul? Do's he not *afford thee a Day of Grace*, in which the influences of the Spirit may be effectual for thy Salvation; do's he *not offer* his assisting, quickning Grace, if thou wilt but *ask it*; do's he not give thee greater encouragement, to expect a *promised Blessing* as to thy Soul, than he do's for thy Body, as Spiritual Promises are more absolute than Temporal? and what can thy God do more in a *way worthy* of himself? he can't do a *weak* thing, any more than a *wicked*, an *unfit* thing, any more than an *unjust*; for his Wisdom is as essential to his Nature, as Holiness and Justice; what he has done *is best*, and sufficiently *apt* to answer the end, there is *no need* of any more: O bless God therefore for what he has done, and plead not
with

with him, by wishing that he would work a Miracle, or that in a Moment, without any means, he would change thy Heart; this is *needless*, there is no reason for it, but great reason against it; that the Honour of his settled Constitution may be maintained, that his Word may be magnify'd, his Servants honoured, his Sovereign Grace glorify'd, his House attended, his Ordinances valued, and Creatures may both *work and wait*, as becomes those that are to receive *their all* from him, when they deserve *nothing*, and *forfeit* every thing. God may create another World in a Moment, God may if he please convert all the World in the twinkling of an Eye; but *meer Power* is not God, or *meer Mercy*; not a *single Perfection*, but *All-perfection* is Deity; the *Wisdom* of the matter is to be consider'd, as much as the *Power* or *Goodness* that may be discover'd in the Performance; whatever *infinite Wisdom* do's, we are sure is *best*, and whatsoever he *do's not*, we are as sure is neither *unjust* nor *unkind*; for all the Operations of the Deity must be agreeable to his *Essential Perfections*, and *Sacred Declarations*, his *Work* and *Word* must agree: If by the *one* we are assured he is willing to save, by the *other* we are also assured that he *will do* what is *fit* to promote that Salvation. Good God, what can I desire more! Bless the Lord O my Soul, let me praise him, while Devils rage; they have no hope, but I have *hope and help*, blessed be the Name of the Lord. We must not only *justify* God, but *take heed* to ourselves, that we watch against *Sin and Satan*, that the Word may not prove our Death. Satan *designs* our ruin, and Sin promotes it; we must watch

watch therefore against all Temptation, that Eph. 4.27. we may not at *any time give place to the Devil*. Beware of the Ignorance, Inconsideration and Infidelity, of that Malignity, Obduracy and Impenitency, of that Pride, Sensuality and Worldliness, of that Hypocrisy, Sloth and Prophaneness, that are the *common Causes* of Death. Let us avoid those Books and Companions, that Business or Diversion, that hinders Attendance on, or Improvement by the Word. Let the Sabbath be Holy, let the Sanctuary be your Delight, let the Word be your Food, let the Saints be your Companions; let *Prayer* be your *Pleasure*, that you may be kept from Sin, and quickned to Duty, that you may *love* the Word, and *live* the Word, and then you'll be happy for ever.

C H A P. X.

A Use of Exhortation to Ministers and Hearers, 1. To the People.

1. **T**O the People is the Word either the *Salvour of Life or Death*; to every Soul, there is not *one exception*, in all Places, and in all Generations, where the Gospel has come: Be exhorted then *so to hear*, as that *your Souls may live*. 'Tis most certain you may hear much, and yet not live, you may hear of Bread and yet starve, you may hear of Eternal Life, and yet without considering what *you hear*, and *how you hear*, you will perish for ever. The Scripture doth most plainly assert, that some Hearers are *Soul-deceivers*, in that number may be reckoned the *unattentive* Hearer, that James 1. doth not incline the Ear to the Divine Testi- 22. monies, and fasten it to the Door of the Sanctuary: The *Inconsiderate* that do's not ponder in his Heart the things that are spoken: The *Injudicious* that doth not make things to differ, and see Truths in their proper Light; the *Unapprehensive*, who is deaf to the *voice of the Charmer*, though he *charmeth never so wisely*: The *Prejudiced*, who instead of praying over, can plead against the Words that are spoken: The *Phantastical*, who likes only the Phrase, but hates the Truth: The *Notional*, who is more concern'd about a Party Orthodoxy than true Di-

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vinity:

vinity : The *Talkative*, whose Lip, but not whose Life do's *certify*, that he belongs to such a Church : The *Censorious*, who can catch at a *single* Expression, and let drop the *whole* Body of Divinity, lose a Sermon, because he don't like a Word : The *Malignant exasperating* Hearer, who will, as the Hearers of holy

Acts 7.54. Stephen did, *gnash his Teeth*, and rage against that Truth, seeking Advantages against the Minister, whose design is no worse than to sanctify and save : The *self-designing* Hearer, who only aims at secular Advantage, who gives the Ear, that he may the better take the Purse. Such Persons as these, are great Objects of Contempt and Compassion, as they deceive their own Souls : Take heed therefore if you value your Souls, as you are commanded,

Lu. 8. 18. *how you hear ; before you come to the House of God, prepare your Souls for the receiving the Truths as they are in Jesus, laying aside all*

Jam. 1. 2. 1. *Filthiness and superfluity of Naughtiness ; when Abraham went up to the Mount, he left his Servants in the Valley ; leave the World behind, when you go to hear of the Concerns of the Eternal State ; for cares will*

Gen. 22. 5. *choak the Word. Consider well the Importance of what you are to hear, it is the*

Rom. 1. 16. *power of God unto Salvation ; consider where you are going, for God will be sanctify'd by*

Lev. 10. 3. *all that draw nigh unto him ; say as Jacob did*

Gen. 28. 16. *of Bethel, surely the Lord is in this Place. Pray for your Self and Minister ; I beseech you*

Rom. 15. 30. *says the Great Apostle, that you strive with me in your Prayers to God for me ; the more you*

pray for your Minister, the more likely are you

you to profit by him; pray for thy self, that God would give thee a calm, united, serious, teachable Spirit, that by the Voice of Man, you may be taught of God; come to the Word with an Appetite, waiting for God, as for Rain, gasping after the Word, as the chopped Earth for Showers; attend on the Word with Reverence, without a wandering or slumbering Eye; the Christians may learn of Turks and Heathens, tho' the Pagans differ'd as to the choice of the Deities, yet they all agreed, that what was said must be received as truth with all possible Veneration; and Mahometans are (a) more solemn in their sacred Ministrations, than many who worship the only living and true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent. When you hear, beware of a dull Ear, and itching Ear; some stop their Ears like the Adder, and some by itching Ears turn away from the Truth unto Fables; such are only for the new Doctrine, and the sweet Song, and complain as the Carnal did, they have nothing but the old Burden. When you hear exercise Faith and Love, without which the Word will neither profit nor please; apply the Word to thy Conscience, hear thou this, and know it for thy self, this will prevent shameful drowziness: Alas, for want of this many nod, as if Religion was a Dream!

Is. 8. 11.

Job 29. 23.

Ps. 58. 4.

2 Tim.

4. 3.

Acts 17.

19.

Ezek. 33.

32.

Jer. 23. 33.

Job 5. ult.

Heb. 4. 2.

The Romans washt their Hands and Feet before they sacrificed to their Gods, they worshipt with their Heads covered, that they might not be disturbed by the sight of a Friend or Enemy; *Purpureo velare comas, adopertus amictu, Virgil.*

(b) Ricauts History of the Turks.

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when thou hast heard the Word, Retire, Meditate and Pray ; as the clean *Beasts* chew the Cud, so the *fear of the Lord is clean*, it will make us as we ought *tremble at the Word*, and then by Meditation retain it, and keep it in *the midst of our Heart* ; they that love the Word, will pray that they may *live the Word* : The Great God says, I am *the Lord which teacheth thee to profit*, look up therefore to him, that thou may'st *rejoice in the Word*, as one that findeth great Spoil, and be a Doer as well as a Hearer, without which the Word cannot be the *Savour of Life*. If thou wouldst so hear, as that thy Soul may live, remember these short Lessons ; prepare with Prayer, attend with Reverence, receive the Word in Faith and Love, discern with Judgment, compare with Wisdom, retain with Faithfulness, revolve with Frequency, apply it Suitably, and live it Constantly : may you be exhorted thus to hear, 'tis not a vain thing, 'tis your Life. Let it never be said of any of us, as it was said of the Pharisees, they rejected the Counsel of God against themselves ; or as it was said of the Jews, ye put it from you, and judge your selves unworthy of Eternal Life ; that is a deplorable Case indeed, it is represented by the Apostle as Witchcraft, who hath bewitched you, that ye will not believe the Truth ? The Devil must have great Power over such Persons to blind their Eyes, and harden their Hearts, and stupify their Consciences, they must be possessed as he ruleth in the Hearts of the Children of Disobedience : a Bodily Possession is a dismal Spectacle, but a Soul Possession is much more so ; we are more sensible of the one than the

PROV. 4. 4.
21.

PS 119.
162.

LU. 7. 30.
ACTS 13.
46.

GAL. 3. 1.

EPH. 2. 2.

the other, but the one is much more *dangerous* than the other. This is the *Case* of those that reject the Word of God, they are in the *possession* of Satan, and possesst by him; they are his Captives: and what can be supposed more dreadful, than to be the Slaves of him who will deceive you in one World, and will torment you in another? O let this Judgment be deprecated with all thy Power, and stir up thy self now, and call upon thy God, that he may incline thee to *look* to his Word, and *love* his Word, that it may set thee free from the powers of Darkness, it may *sanctify* thee now, and *save* thee for ever. This is not to be expected, if you don't *value* the Word above all things, and put your selves under its *Authcrity*, resolving in the strength of Christ, to do or not do, love or hate, avoid or pursue as it directs. That you may, consider a *few Motives*.

1. 'Tis the *Word of the Eternal God*. The Word of a wise and good Man deserves thy Ear; the Voice of an Angel would command thy Attention, and will you not then have an *awful regard* to what the *Mouth of the Lord hath spoken*. Dost thou consider O Man, that he made thee, and in a Moment he can undo thee; thy Being, Breath, and Bread are his Vouchsafements, precarious Donatives, thou hast them but at *Pleasure*, his Will is thy only Tenure, and he may *Will* thee in a Moment into Dust, and *wink* thee into Eternal Flames: O tremble to think how long thou hast trifled with the God of Life and Death, *who killeth and maketh alive* 1 Sam. 2. 6.

as he pleases: how long thou hast been *in jest* about the most serious things, and scorn'd both the Authority and Benignity of an Infinite Majesty! How wonderful has been the patience of God? it has been indeed *long-suffering*, or else thy Body had been rotting under Ground, and thy Soul roaring in Hell, instead of reading these Lines, and having liberty to look into his Word. Let a Sense of thy past Folly cover thee with shame, and humble thee before the Lord; and now open thy Eye and behold the *Signature* of God on his own Word, it bears the *Superscription* of Heaven, look on the *Broad-Seal*, and then say, shall I reject it, shall I give *the Lie* to a God of *Truth*, and despise the Message of the Almighty? surely one Day he will *avenge himself* on me, *tear me in pieces*, and there shall be none to deliver me.

2. 'Tis the Word of the Eternal God, deliver'd at the *expence of the Blood* of his own Son. Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the *only begotten* of the Father; be astonisht O Soul, that the Great God should have but *one Son*, and he should die, that thou may'st hear the words of Eternal Life. This is the *Wonder* of Heaven, the great Mystery of Love into which the *Angels desire to look*, and is it not wonderful in thy Eye; had not the Son of God hung on an *accursed Tree*, and there breathed out his Soul, thy Soul must have perisht for ever; not *one Word* had been spoken to thee, but thou hadst been abandon'd by God as a Soul *dead in Sin*, dead in Law, condemned to an
Eternal

Eternal Hell. Shall the Father part with an only Son, and that Son part with his very Blood, and shall not what they say have a bearing? wilt thou not give ear to one that died for thee, to deliver thee from Eternal Torment? O monstrous Ingratitude, horrid Injustice! in the last days God sent his Son, expecting that surely they would bear him; if any thing would move, it must be the Bowels of the Father, and the Blood of the Son; and yet do's this not affect thee? don't the Sighs and Groans, the Pain and Torture, the Agony and Death of a crucify'd Jesus, draw a Tear and Sigh from thy Soul? what can work upon thee? is there any thing beyond Death? no, only an *Eternal Flame*, that will fully convince thee of thy Fault and Folly. Believe it O Soul, it must be a very *serious thing*, a most *momentous Concern*. When Christ speaks to thee from a *bloody Cross*, turn and live; when he applies himself to thee with *Garments roll'd in Blood*, at how *vast an Expence* do's he speak? Is there another Son? or wouldst thou have him die again? or dost thou think thou shalt not answer one Day to him for thy Contempt and Scorn? In the Name of Jesus of Nazareth, I charge thee fall down and give him Glory, take up his *Book* and read it, or else as he dyed a Sacrifice for Sin, thou must die a Sacrifice to flaming Vengeance; the Death of Christ will add Bitterness to thy Death, and Torment to thy Hell.

3. 'Tis a Word *designed for the good of thy Soul*. God is not *willing thou shouldst perish*; his Son died for this end, that *thou may'st have Redemp-* Eph. 1. 7.
tion

Col. 1.14 *tion through his Blood* ; by virtue of that Blood a
 Heb 9.12. *Book is wrote*, to assure thee that God is willing
 to do good to thy Soul, to sanctifie and save
 it ; and dost thou not believe thou hast a Soul ?
 surely thou art something more than meer
 organized Dust, a thoughtless Clod : the *Questi-*
on is a Proof, every thought that passes, do's
certify that God once *breathed into thee a Living*
Soul ; and dost thou not think that this Soul
 is *more valuable* , than a perishing frame of
 Dust and Dung ? An Intelligent, Active, Im-
 mortal Being, can't be a low-priz'd thing ; it
 raises thee above the Brutal World, it gives
 thee a resemblance of the Deity, it sets thee
 at the top of a Visible World, and renders
 thee capable of the Visions, Enjoyments, Em-
 ployments and Converses of the Eternal State,
 a Soul therefore must be of *great value* ; for
 this was the Blood of Christ poured forth as
 the only *sufficient price* for its Recovery , if
 this be *lost*, all the *valuables* of ten thousands
 can't redeem it ; what *will it profit a Man if*
he gain the whole World, and lose his Immortal
 Mar. 8 ; 36. *Soul ? what will a Man give in exchange for his*
Soul ? he would give all, and all would be as
nothing. Again, dost thou not believe that
 this *valuable Soul* needs some light and help
 from God ? is it not in an Apostate State, dark-
 ned, defiled, disgraced, and condemned ? is
 it of it self *fit* for Heaven, or *sure* of Heaven ;
 is thy own *Head* and *Hand* sufficient with-
 out the Light, Love and Help of God ? Alas,
 vain Man ! of thy self, thou canst not *think*
one good Thought ; thy *sufficiency is only of the Lord*.
 Why now God is willing to give thee what
 thy Soul needs, Light, Purity, Srength and
 Salva-

Salvation : In this matter he has given thee *his Word*, he *speaks* that *thou may'st be healed* : O improve therefore those Words of Blessing ; let *the Love of Christ constrain* thee ; if thou hast any Love for thy Soul, hearken to the Voice of Wisdom, by this only canst thou be wise unto Salvation.

4. 'Tis the *last Word* God will speak for the Salvation of immortal Souls. This is the last Dispensation ; these are the *last Days* ; after ^{Heb. 1. 2.} many Prophets God *sent his Son*, and after him no Person shall be sent, to settle any other Method of Salvation : The Father calls upon you to *hear his Son* and live ; if you don't, there remains *no more Sacrifice for Sin* ; there ^{Heb. 10. 26.} will be *no other Bible* to the end of the World, no other Term of Salvation offer'd, no other Constitution settled by which it will be more easy to get to Heaven. This is the *Word that sounds* till the Trumpet shall call to Judgment ; *He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned* ; *he that hath the Son hath Life, and he that hath not the Son hath not Life* ; *He that hath an Ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the Churches* ; *Now or never*. This is the last Tryal ; if thou dost miscarry now, thou art undone for ever, without Appeal, without Reprieve. Bethink thy-self therefore, O Soul ; when thou dost read or hear the Word, say, If this does me no good, no *other Word* ever will. God has finish'd his Book, sealed it up, and it must last *till Time shall be no longer* ; and if I am not sanctify'd by it before I have finish'd my Life, I am miserable for ever.

5. If

Lu. 16. 31.

5. If the Word does not convince thee, thou hast no reason to think *that any-thing else ever will. If you believe not Moses and the Prophets, neither will you be persuaded tho' one rise from the dead.* The Word is a *Mean apt and sufficient* to answer its End, as appointed by infinite Wisdom and Goodness, it can't be *defective* in any-thing that has a Tendency to promote Salvation; such a *Deficiency* would darken the Divine Perfections, and reflect on the Counsels of Heaven. If this is a *sufficient Mean*, what canst thou, O Soul, desire more? Art thou for making Experiments on thy-self? Art thou so *bold* as to put the Deity on the expence of Miracles to try thy Faith? Art thou then willing the Grave should open, that a Messenger from the Dead may appear and deliver a Message from the eternal God to convince thee of thy Fault and Folly? Art thou willing that the *Order of Nature* shall be broken, and the Creation thrown into a *general Convulsion*, and the very Frame of it crack, that thou may'st be persuaded there is a God, and that his Word is worthy of thy Credit and Acceptance? Alas, vain Man! hast thou any *Claim* to put in, any such Demand to make? Are thy *Deserts* so great, that it would be Injustice or Unkindness in God not thus to entertain thee? Must the World be hung in black before thou wilt weep over thy Sin? Must they that *sleep* in the Dust be *disturbed*, before thy Conscience shall be awa-ken'd? Must violence be offer'd to the *regular System* of Nature, before thou wilt believe what the Lord has spoken? What need is there of it? what reason is there for it? Is this thy Demand?

Demand? what daring Insolence must it import? have not others as much right as thee? and may not all Men with equal reason request the same? and if so, of what use is thy Reason? or of what use will be the Divine Revelation? how needless is a *settled Constitution*, the Contrivance of infinite Wisdom? If every particular Person was convinced by the power of a particular Miracle, what a Force would this be to Nature? What Violence would be offer'd to thy thinking Powers, if an irresistible Voice should say, *Let there be Light!* When God speaks to *passive thoughtless Matter*, he commands, and 'tis done; but when he speaks to *active thinking Spirits*, he not only commands, but says, *let us reason together*. He expostulates with Man in a way suitable to his nature; that Man may glorify him by a *clear Assent* and *entire Consent*; that both Understanding and Will may be concerned as becomes intelligent Beings. Why then should God act against thy Nature, or without it? Why should he deal with thee as with Stones and Brutes? or why should he do any-thing more, when what he has already said and done has been slighted and rejected? Is thy Forfeiture and Misimprovement a just plea for miraculous Operations? Darest thou say, Lord, tho' thy Word has convinced thousands, 'tis not sufficient to convince me; I don't value it, therefore I desire thou wouldst display thy Power some other way, that I may be persuaded? How criminal is such Arrogance! How blasphemous is such a Request! What reason hast thou to think that any other Method, when the Word of God is not improved, would be effectual? Canst thou have
brighter

brighter Evidence, stronger Arguments, than what the Gospel offers? Can an Angel say or do greater things than what thy Saviour has said and done? Can greater Proof be given as to the reality of the invisible World, than what has been already given by the Words and Works of the Son of God? Would an Impression on Sense be more lasting, than the Force of Reason moved by suitable Arguments? Would any Miracle convince without the Divine Spirit? And is not the Word the Ministration of the Spirit? Have not miraculous Operations been unsuccessful? and why must they be effectual with thee? Is thy Nature and Temper so very particular that they can't fail, when they have with Thousands? Sense indeed is great Evidence; but if thy Heart is not changed, the Impression will soon wear away; and if it do's not, without the Spirit of God it will be but as a Vision in the Night. O tremble to think if thou art deaf to and dead under the Word; thy Case is unspeakably dangerous; for either no other Method will ever be used, or if us'd, is never likely to be bless'd.

6. If thou art not convinced by the Word now, thy *Day of Grace* may soon end, and then the Word it-self will never affect thee, thou art left of God, dead in Sin.

Under a Gospel-Dispensation thou hast, O Man, a Day of Grace, made up of outward Light and inward Influence; but thy Day is *limited*; as it opens in a bright Morning, it may shut up with a dark Evening; therefore art thou commanded to *seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near*; the

the Day of Grace may be shorter with thee than others; the Sun may soon set with thee, and the Shadows of a spiritual Evening stretch themselves on thee. According to thy Misimprovement, and the Divine Resentment, thy Day will shorten or lengthen; and it may grow shorter by degrees and thou not be sensible of it: the *measure of thy Iniquities* may be *filling up*, and thy Eyes not observe how high they rise, whether thou art sensible or no. Thy Day of Grace may end before thy Day of Nature; so it was with Sinners in *Jerusalem*: The Palace of the Majesty of Heaven; the magnificent Building of God, the House of Prayer was abandoned by God, left desolate, without any vital Beams and spiritual Dew. This drew Tears from the Redeemer's Eyes, who fully knew the worth of Souls, and the dreadful Consequence of God's departing from them. God may soon cast thee out of his *Presence*, and give thee up to thy own *Lusts*, remove *external Means* of Grace, and suspend the *Influences* of his Spirit; he may deliver thee over to the *Deceiver*, and pour out on thee a *Spirit of slumber*, as a just Punishment for past Sins, and then there is an end of thee, thou art mark'd out for eternal Misery; the *Word* will not affect thee, and the *World* can't save thee. The Great God has not told us when the Day of Grace shall thus end; he has not given us any *certain Rule*, by which we shall know, as to particular Persons, when the Day is over; therefore no Man can *positively* say, the Day of Grace is at an end with me; because God has made it the Duty of every
Man

Man, as long as he lives, to believe and repent. No Man dare despair; he may have reason to fear the Day of Grace is ended, by the *Aggravation* and *Continuance* of Sin, the *Malignity* of his Temper, and *Hardness* of his Heart; and so shall stir up himself immediately, and call upon his God, that *so the thought of his heart may be forgiven him*, but he has no right or reason to say, *I must now despair of forgiving Grace*; for God has not declared when the Day of Grace shall end as to a particular Person, to prevent *Rage* and *Despair*. The Knowledge of it would do *no good*, for the Man's State is unalterably fix'd; and it would do *much hurt*, it would make this Earth as the Suburbs of Hell, it would fill the Earth with *blasphemous Rage* and *Agony*, raise the Cries of the miserable Wretches to such a height of Fury, as would make the Lives of the Godly too uncomfortable; and the Wicked, under the sense of being *eternal Cast-aways*, might torment the Righteous, and make a universal Carnage and Slaughter throughout the Earth, like so many incarnate Devils ——— God therefore *in much Mercy* has kept this as a *Secret*; and has in *Mercy* told us when *the Day of Grace is not over*, to promote Repentance, and prevent Despair. If I am willing to attend on Ordinances, if I am inquisitive about my Salvation, if I have any *Tenderness* of Conscience, if I am desirous of the Spirit of God, if I can weep over Sin, and long for a Saviour to deliver me from a Body of Sin and Death, I may be sure the Day of Grace is not ended with me.

But

But if I don't improve by the Word of God, I may be soon forsaken of God. This Thought should make my Flesh tremble, if I ask my-self a few Questions: I have heard the Word of God often in his own House, and have had some Convictions; but have I not after all refused Gospel-Offers, not accepting of Christ as a Prophet, Priest, and King, with an entire Consent and hearty Compliance? Have I not continued in the Commission of wilful Sins, and thereby sinned against the Light of my Conscience? Have I not stifled the Motions of the Divine Spirit, by *imprisoning the Truths of God in Unrighteousness*? Have I not neglected the Ordinances of God, despised Gospel-Ministers, and so hardened my-self that the Word don't affect me? Have I not sometimes thought the Gospel was an Imposture, or secretly wish'd it was not true? Have I not found in me a Contempt of God, a Malignity against him? Am I not ready to rage against him, as he don't allow me in my Sin? and have I not said that Seriousness is Delusion? Is this thy Case, O Soul? thy Day of Grace may *soon end*. If thou dost not return to the *Word* of God, and do thy *first Works*; if thou dost not attend *on* and attend *to* what is spoken, and pray for the Spirit of the living God, thou must perish for ever. Let me charge and beseech thee now to go to the *Law and Testimony*; read thy Bible, and beg the Divine Blessing; God may *restore* thee, and after all thy Backslidings *shew thee his Salvation*.

7. If the Day of Grace should not end, yet the *Day of Nature must end*, and it *may* to morrow ; and then the Word of God if misimproved, can do thee *no good*, no not for ever. Let me tell thee, O Man, thou that dost not value or improve the Word of the Eternal God, Eccl. 3. 2. thou art *but a Mortal* ; as *there is a Time to be born*, so *there is a Time to die* ; a Time most certain, nothing can prevent it : God hath fixed *the bounds beyond which thou canst not pass* ; a Time as to the most *uncertain*. Thou dost fade as a Leaf, and flee as a Shadow, but dost not know the Day of thy Death. A Time most *proper* to answer the great Ends of the God of Life and Death ; thou must die in the very *fulness* of Time. A Time most awful ; think, O Man, how awful a thing it is to die. Thou knowest but little of the eternal World into which thou must pass ; thy Sin when thou art hovering between two Worlds, may fill thy Soul with inexpressible Horror ; the *Pain* of dissolving Nature may be unspeakably great, Satan may accuse and torment thy departing Spirit ; and thou wilt find in that *awful Moment*, that all the *Valuables* of this World are but as a *breaking Bubble*, and *passing Shadow* ; nothing of this Earth will afford the least Help and Comfort ; all that thou hast *got* in this Earth with all thy Care and Labour, thy Art and Cunning, thy Shifts and Tricks, will be *lost at once* ; and the more thou hast *got*, the more thou wilt *lose* ; and with all this World, the very *Hope* of another will perish for ever.

Thou

Thou wilt find that *after death is the Judgment* ; thou wilt change Worlds, and appear before an Impartial Tribunal to answer for all things done *with*, and *in* the Body ; and as an Impenitent Abuser of Gospel Grace, thou wilt be Sentenced to an Eternal *Hell*, there to feel the Vengeance of that God for ever whose Word thou hast despised ; Oh dreadful Change ! Oh amazing Revolution ! Canst thou, Oh Sinner, think on this Time to die, and not tremble ! let me tell thee, 'tis a *single time* thou canst die *but once* ; and if the Word does not change thee, thou art undone for ever. This may be thy Case *this Day* ; bethink thy self therefore while thou art standing on *holy Ground* ; commune with thy Spirit, while thou art *wearing down* to a Grave. In the Name of God charge thy self to consider that thou that art dying every moment, do the work of Time in Time, *now or never* ; for thy breath goeth forth, thou returnest to the Earth, in that *very day* all thy thoughts will perish : prevent the Death of thy Soul by preparing for the Death of thy Body ; when the Sun is setting don't dream of a long Day.

Ps. 146. 4.

8. And lastly, Consider that as thou must die, so that Word which thou dost now despise, must judge thee. God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the World. Judgment is fixt to a Day, the Word of God will be the Rule of Judgment. The words that I have spoken, says our Blessed Lord, the same shall judge him in the last day. Believe this O Soul, and tremble, for the Mouth of the eternal Son has spoken it ; the Judge himself, who well knows by what Rule to proceed : the words are spoken to thee, if thou

dost reject and oppose the Gospel of Salvation; *to thee* if thou art so proud as to think the Word of Life too *mean* a thing for thy notice, regard, and entertainment; *to thee* if the love of thy Lusts, prevents thy acceptance of Gospel Offers; *to thee* if thou art indifferent whether the word be Life or Death unto thee, and so art not concerned about a Gospel Invitation; but makest *thy excuse* by a *Piece of Ground,*

Luk. 14. 8. *a Wife or a Yoke of Oxen.* If thou art such an one, I tell thee, the Word will judge thee at the last day; the abused Word will be the cause of thy condemnation; by its Authority it will oblige to punishment, for he that believeth not shall

Mark 16. 16. *be damned*; it will witness against thee, and as a Rule, according to it thou wilt be condemned: Let it therefore be the Rule of thy Life, that it may not be the Rule of thy Judgment to eternal Death. In the great Day, says

Rom. 2. 16. the great Apostle; God shall judge the secrets of Men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel. Think

on this, you that shut up the Bible. In that day the Books will be open'd, when all shall stand before the Judgment-Seat, great and small: There shall be a general Congress, a universal Appearance of Angels, Men and Devils; all the

Rev. 20. 12. Inhabitants of Heaven, Earth and Hell shall be convened, and make up one general Assembly. Where wilt thou stand, Oh! Presumptuous Sinner! canst thou prevent thy appearance! Thou must appear, the Trump of God will force thee. Canst thou bribe thy Judge? he is *not* a respecter of Persons? Canst thou dare him in the Solemnities of Judgment? He will make thy Dust and Ashes shake; for *who can stand before him when once he is angry?* Canst thou

thou dispute him? thy own *Mout* will condemn thee. Canst thou reverse his Sentence? the *Judgment of the Lord must stand*. Canst thou bear his Indignation! Alas, *Thou wilt call to the Hills to cover thee, and the Mountains to fall on thee*. Be wise therefore in Time, Christ appears now as a *Saviour*; hear what he says, read what he has wrote, consider what he has done, accept what he offers; go to him and Covenant with him; say, Lord, *I will be thine, thine on thy own Terms, thine for ever*. Thus you will do, if you *firmly believe* a Judgment Day, if you *seriously consider* it, and if you *duly prepare* for it; and then the word of God will be esteemed, the Servants of God valued, the Ordinances of God attended; the House of God frequented; and hereby your Sanctification will be promoted, and your eternal Ruin mercifully prevented: Thus do, that your *Souls may live* a Life of Grace here, and of Glory for ever. —

I proceed now to the proposed *Exhortation* to Ministers; because I have not time to draw up any thing shorter, and shall gratify the desire of many Friends. I shall publish an *Exhortation*, sometime since delivered at a (a) *Publick Ordination* wherein I speak as much to my self, as to any, and would propose every thing with due humility, and deference to *Aged Ministers*, whose Gifts and Labours I value, and for whose success I would always pray. May the great High Priest accept the Design, and Crown it with success.

(a) *Delivered at the publick Ordination of Mr. John Cumming, at Shepton Mallet, Somersetshire, now Minister in Cambridge.*

C H A P.

The Exhortation.

THE great *Apostle* and *High Priest* of our profession, has this day call'd you, my dear Brother, to bear his Name, plead his Cause, deliver his Message, defend his Truth, and display his Glory. It is more proper for days to
 Job 32. 7. speak to you, and for multitude of years to teach you Wisdom: If we remember the Command that
 Lev. 19. 32. was given under the Law; *Thou shalt rise up before the hoary Head, and honour the face of the old Man*; and if we consider what the Prophet said, was an instance of great disorder in a
 Isa. 3. 5. Land; when the Child behaves himself proudly against the antient, and the base against the honourable; I therefore made many private Excuses; but not being accepted I shall not make any publick Apology.

They that were consecrated under the Law had a Charge given them, and they were to keep the Charge of the Lord, as Joshua did on whom Moses laid his hands, and gave him the Charge. A Moses is not now to be expected; but the Authority of a gospel Minister, is not to be despised, whose Commission is not less sacred, and whose Office is not less honourable: for he that is least in the Kingdom of Heaven, is greater
 Mat. II. than John the Baptist.

Two things in general I charge on you my Brother, by the Authority of Christ, and commend to you in the Bowels of Jesus.

I. That

First, That you *magnifie the Redeemer*, who has this day call'd you.

Secondly, That you *manage your self* suitable to so high and holy a Calling.

1st. That you *magnifie the Redeemer*, who has this day call'd you ; the Apostle Paul gave Thanks to Christ, who put him into the Ministry, ^{1 Tim. 1.} and so should you ; This day should be with ^{12.} you a day of thanksgiving, if you consider the Office with which you are now invested and intrusted is of all the most honourable and useful, you have reason to think so ; if you consider the distinguishing Titles by which Persons invested in this Sacred Office are dignified, as *Angels, Ambassadors, and Bishops, &c.* If you consider the important Subject of your Ministry, you are concern'd about Matters of the noblest Nature and highest Value ; nothing less than the Glory of God, and the Good of Immortal Souls, the rectifying disorder'd Spirits, the regulating Licentious Lives, the turning Sinners from the Error of their Ways, and the confirming and comforting Saints, that they may hold out to the End, and be saved. Your Business is to enlighten the dark World, to raise Temples for the Divine Service out of the Ruins of the Apostacy, to check the Deluge of Iniquity that overflows the Earth, and out of it to raise up a Nursery for Heaven. What you are to do, is a Joy to the Angels in Heaven, a Disappointment to the Powers of Darkness, as you honour the Redeemer, and do good to the Redeemed. What you are con-

cern'd in, is of everlasting Consequence, as your Ministrations must issue in the Salvation or Damnation of Immortal Souls; to all you will

Rom. 11. 13. be either a Saviour of Life or Death: Magnify therefore your Office, and magnifie the Name of the Lord. As under the Law there was a Sacrifice of Atonement, that old Sin might not be brought into a new State, so there was a burnt Offering, a Sacrifice of Thanksgiving, that God might have the Honour of his own Grace: Let your Praise ascend as Incense from the Altar, let your Song be this day, Bless the Lord O my Soul. When Isaiah was sent as a Prophet, it was said to him, to his great Comfort, Thine Iniquity is taken away: If you have repented of all past Sins, he that hath this day call'd you, speaks to you by his Word, Be of good cheer, your Iniquities are forgiven. When Aaron was Consecrated, he was not only wash'd with Water, to represent the Purity of his Office, but he was cloath'd with rich Garments, to shew its high Dignity, and he was anointed with Oil, that he might rejoice in his high Commission; it was the Oil of Gladness. I exhort you this day to rejoice, saying, By the Grace of God I am what I am; bless God that your Life has been spar'd, your Youth instructed, your Heart inclin'd, and your Spirit prepar'd for so high and holy a Calling; and Bless God, that you are now solemnly invested.

2dly, Manage your self suitable to so high a
1 Tim. 4. 16. Calling, take heed to thy self and to thy Doctrine, and continue therein; and in so doing thou shalt save thy self and them that hear thee. It must be freely own'd, and as bitterly lamented, that some are a Reproach to the Ministry by Ignorance

rance and Pride, Covetousness and Sensuality, Strife and Sloth ; I say therefore this day to thee, as it was said to Archippus, *Take heed to thy Ministry, which thou hast received from the Lord,* ^{Colos. 17.} *that thou fulfil it.* There are many Duties to be performed, and many Comforts to be enjoy'd ; endeavour to be so holy as to discharge the one, and so happy to thy self as to enjoy the other ; for there is nothing better for thee, than to rejoice and do good. Your Calling is high, beware therefore of little things ; your Calling is holy, beware therefore of ill things ; take heed to thy self ; for Temptations will endanger you, and Difficulties will discourage you ; take heed that your Head be clear, your Heart warm, your Hand ready, and your Foot steady in the Way and Work of the Lord, that God may be glorified and many Souls saved,

Now that in the Strength of Jesus Christ (from whose fulness only you receive both Gifts and Graces) you may manage your self suitable to the Obligations and Privileges of your sacred Office, I desire you, in the Name of Jesus Christ, my Lord and Master, to consider seriously, and observe faithfully a few Directions :

1. *Increase in Knowledge.* As a Scholar it highly becomes you to improve in all Parts of useful Learning, whether Rational, Critical, or Historical. The Mind will languish without Recruits by reading, as the Body will waste and pine away without Food and Physick. Without gradual improvement in Knowledge, you will not be long comfortable to your self or Useful to others as a Minister ; it's peculiarly

peculiarly necessary you increase in Knowledge,
 that you may faithfully and fully discharge
 your important Work : The *blind Beast* was
 not accepted under the Law, and the *ignorant*
Priest is not approved under the Gospel. You
 are to be a *light* to a dark World, you must
 therefore often Oyl the Lamp, that you may
 not give an uncertain light. The *Priest's Lips*
 are to preserve Knowledge, the People are to seek the
 Law at their Mouth, as they are the Messengers of
 the Lord of Host. You are to be an able Minister
 of the New Testament, studying to shew your self
 approved of God, a Workman that needeth not to be
 ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth.
 You are to be able always to give a Reason of the
 Hope that is in you, that you may convince Gain-
 sayers ; for which end nothing can be more ne-
 cessary than improv'd Knowledge. Don't dese-
 crate your high and holy Office by unprofitable
 Studies ; let not your Thoughts evaporate in airy
 Speculations or smoaky Controversies ; but
 improve in that which is most important and
 useful. Above all things study the *Sacred Wri-*
tings, which are able to make you wise to Salva-
 tion. Let Critical and Practical Comments on
 the Book of God be your great and constant
 Entertainment, that out of that Sacred Trea-
 sure you may bring forth things new and old.
 The Bible is the Statute-Book of Heaven, and
 you are an Advocate for Immortal Souls, you
 should therefore be well acquainted with the
 Laws and Statutes of Heaven. Remember that
 you are not a Minister of Plato or Plutarch, but
 of Christ, a Minister of the New Testament ;
 read it therefore with exactness, and delight in
 the Originals that you your self may not mistake,

and others by you may not miscarry. Study and Preach the Lord Jesus Christ in his Person and Offices, Doctrines and Miracles, Promises and Rewards. Let all other Knowledge bow to this, as the *Sheaves* did to the *Sheaf of Joseph*; for to know Christ, is Life Eternal. Study, John. 3. that you may instruct others with all *Wisdom*,^{15.} that your *Sermons* may not be hasty Births, without *Shape and Proportion*; that you may speak the things which become sound Doctrine, de-Tit. 2. 1. clearing all the Council of God; foolish and unlearn'd Acts 20. Questions avoid, as they do gender strife. Strive^{27.} not therefore about Words to no profit to the Sub-^{2 Tim. 2. 23.} version of the Hearers. Ministers disputation, in ver. 14. the Judgment of the great Apostle, is the Peoples Subversion; insist therefore on the most weighty and necessary Points, without flanting Eloquence and useless Pageantry, without affected Obscurity or supercilious Nicety, without forced Meanness and careless Familiarity. Speak with the Gravity of an Ambassador, treating about Matters of Life and Death. Beware of hard Words and soft Arguments. Remember Rom. 1. that you are a Debtor both to the Wise and the Un-^{14.} wise. Preach a Word therefore in season, with Words which the Holy Ghost teacheth, that to no 1 Cor. 2. Man you may be as a Barbarian, but you may^{13.} profit, if not please all, by a Method and Stile suited to the Capacity of your Hearers. Pray that your Knowledge may be sanctified, for that is both the Defence and Ornament of the Gospel Ministry; let light and heat be joyn'd together, that while the Head is instructed the Heart may be affected.

2. *Maintain a constant seriousness of Spirit, that you may improve in Holiness.* Without Gifts you can't be *useful*, and without *Grace* you can't be *save'd*. We find by sad Experience, that Knowledge and Holiness are not always joyn'd together ; no, they are too often like the *Two Poles*, when one is *elevated*, the other is *deprest*, look therefore to your *Heart* as well as your *Head* ; if there be *Light* in the one, let there be *Love* in the other, that you may feel the Power of that Word you preach to others, and it may be to your self an *ingrafted Word*. Out of the *Abundance* of your *Heart* let your *Mouth* speak, keep a tender Conscience, void of Offence to-

Acts 24. 16. towards God and Man. What is Commanded do, tho' you hurt your self ; what is lawful don't exceed in, tho' you please your self, and what is doubtful don't proceed in without due Care and

Acts 23. 1. 1 Tim. 3. 9. Caution ; for *whatsoever is not of Faith, is Sin*. Be not only serious on the Lord's-day, but every day ; maintain an *awful Sense* of your Great Work and Glorious Master, that you may be more and more serious ; *spiritualize* this World, and *realize* another. Think often upon the Duties you are to perform, the unspeakable Worth of the Souls for whom you are pleading ; look up to the *Eye* of your Master, that is fix'd upon you ; look downward on the *hollow Earth* on which you stand, and into which, in a little while, you must drop. Look forward to an *awful Tribunal*, and a vast Eternity ; look backward on lost Time, and mis-improv'd Talents ; look round about on dying Persons and perishing Objects, and see the *Fashion* of all Things passing away. You do well to think often on your *Ordination Vow* ; what you have promis'd

mis'd to God, and how you are oblig'd to him ; read often the *Epistles to Timothy and Titus*, as the great Remembrances of your Work and Reward ; Meditate every Day on the *Four last Things*, Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell, and then consider that the Word you Preach to others will *one day judge you*, and, without Holiness, must *condemn you* ; And how dreadful will your Case be, if, when you have preach'd to others, *you your self should be an Eternal Cast-away* ?

3. *Be prudent.* The *Eyes* of many are upon you, and the *Hands and Hearts* of many will be against you : for the *World hates you* ; walk therefore *with wisdom towards them that are without*. Your own *Credit and Comfort*, as well as the *Welfare* of others depends upon it : You must *walk circumspectly* ; if you are not willing that the *Ways of God should be evil spoken of*, you must not lay a *great stress* on little things, nor a *little stress* on great things ; but weighing *every thing* in the *Ballance of the Sanctuary*, and there let *God and the Soul* weigh down all ; you must be *wise as Serpents*, as well as *harmless as Doves*. The great *Variety* of Cases and Circumstances in which you will be concern'd in the course of your Ministry, The Place in which by the Providence of God you are fixing in, does loudly call for Prudence as well as Piety. Take care that *Wisdom* don't degenerate into *Craft*. Look upon *Priest-craft* to be the most ignominious thing in the World. *Tricks and Shifts* are unsuitable to the *Sacred Dignity* of your Function : Let not therefore the *Wisdom* of the Man ever

Colol. 4. 5
Matt. 10. 16
trac

trespass on the *Integrity* of the Christian, or the *Honour* of the Minister : But be wise according to rule. Offences will come, but *Woe* to them by whom they come. If you would avoid them, beware of *Superstition* on the one hand, and *Sensuality* on the other. *Superstition* is the *Ivey* of Religion, that draws its Nourishment, and renders it useless and uncomfortable. *Sensuality* must be a Scandal to your Sacred Function : They that are *sensual*, have not the Spirit. If we eat with the Glutton, and drink with the Drunkard, our Lord will come, and cut us asunder. The Priest shall be made a Sacrifice. By *Superstition* you will expose your self to the *Wise*, and by *Sensuality* you will expose your self to the *Weak*, and by both you will be utterly disabled for any prudent Management, and wise Procedure. Be not busy in other

Pet. 4. 15 *Mens matters* : Don't care, but rather curse a Tale-bearer, who generally has as little Purity as he has Peace. Avoid those Places and Company that will ensnare and expose you ; for there are many Things which are not sinful which are not expedient, which will lessen your Esteem, and abate your Usefulness. The Priests under the Law were to keep themselves at the greatest distance from every thing defiling ; and by Spiritual Wisdom you must shun the Appearance of Evil. Avoid in your Conversation *Moroseness* on the one hand, and *Levity* on the other, that your Ministry be not blamed. Our Reputation is as much in the Hands of God, as our Lives ; but yet it can't be suppos'd that the People will have any regard to what we preach, when they see we have little regard to what we practice.

4. *Be faithful.* Great is your Work, and great regard must be had to Conscience in the constant Discharge of it. It becomes you as a Minister as well as a Christian, to resolve with Holy Job, *I will hold fast my Integrity ; I will not let it go ; my heart sh^ll not reproach me as long as I live.* Conscience is the best Friend or worst Enemy : Keep therefore the *Mystery of Faith in a pure Conscience.* Consider well all the Parts of your Work. You are to attend constantly on Divine Ministrations, labour in the Word and Doctrine, exhort in publick and in private ; watch over the Flock, to preserve them from corrupt Doctrines and Conversation. You are to *oppose* the Growth of dangerous Errors, and the more dangerous prevailing Vices of the Places where you live. You are to direct the Ignorant, rebuke the Vicious, encourage the Righteous, comfort the Disconsolate, and visit the Afflicted ; and you must *pray* as well as *preach*. The High-Priest under the Law had the *Name of the Tribe on his Breastplate* when he went into the Holy Place, to signify the *Love* he bore to them, and the *Concern* he had for them. Love will direct and excite you to pray for your People in *secret*, as well as in the *Sanctuary*. You must not only preach and pray, but *visit* : Let not your Visits be meerly *entertaining*, but *edifying*. Go about as a good Example, a *Pattern of good Works*, that People may learn by your *Works* as well as *Words*. God has made you a *Keeper of the Vineyard* ; *Dress it*, and let it never be said by you, but *My own Vineyard have I not kept*. If you would be faithful to Immortal Souls, you will not *shun to declare all the Counsel of God*, and not *keep back any thing* Acts 20. that 27.

that is profitable for them. You will preach Grace as well as Duty, Precept as well as Privilege. You will speak not as pleasing Men, but God who tryeth the heart. You will have no respect of Persons, but will reprove Sin in rich as well as poor. Love and Affection, Blood and Relation, Power and Grandeur, Flatteries and Entreaties, Bribes and Rewards, will not tempt you to be partial: for you must be without partiality, and without hypocrisie. Tho' you must bear with the Infirmities of the Weak, yet you must not suffer Souls to perish for want of Reproof: You must not flatter where you should frown. Remember these awful Words, *He that saith to the wicked, thou art righteous, him shall the people curse; Nations shall abhor him: but to them that rebuke him shall be delight, and a good blessing shall come upon them.* Without due Reproof, with a Mixture of Authority and Compassion, Prudence and Piety, you will be a Partaker with other Mens Sins. Doctrine will not always do without Discipline. Have a particular Guard on the Table of the Lord. The Priests under the Law were not allow'd to let Strangers eat of the holy things; and the Stewards of the Mysteries of Christ must separate the precious from the vile: the Ignorant and the Prophanes are not to be admitted whatever threatening Difficulties attend it; your Faithfulness will be a great Cordial, living and dying; only the faithful Servant shall enter into his master's joy.

Rom. 12. 5. Be diligent. Not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. To this Command you must always have a due regard

regard ; for *cursed is he that doth the work of the Lord negligently*, when nothing less than *Salvation* is concerned in it : Improve therefore passing time, by reading, meditating and preaching, in the Closet and in the Pulpit. Let the *Love of Christ*, and the *Love of Souls* 2 Cor. 5. constrain you, that you may say with the great 14. Apostle, *I would very gladly spend and be spent* 2 Cor. 12. upon you. The slothful Creature was excluded 15. as not a fit *Sacrifice* under the Law ; and the slothful Man will not be an acceptable Minister. Under the Gospel, some regard must be had to the *health* of the Body ; for no Man *bateth his own Flesh* ; for that reason the Priests under the Law were excused at a *declining Age* ; and a *due regard* must be had to the *Tranquillity*, of the Spirit, that it be not sunk by too great a weight ; but no plea or pretence must make us remiss in the Work of the Lord : this is the way to be succesful. The *diligent Hand* in Spirituals as well as Temporals, is most likely to *make rich*. Without this, and the Blessing of God, there will be the *reproach* of *barrenness* in *Israel*. It's presumption to expect *divine Assistance* without regular *Diligence*. The Priests under the Law were not to *mourn for the dead*, unless for a *near Relation*, and that but for a little while, that they might *continually serve at the Altar* : And Ministers of the Gospel must always *so regulate Divertions*, as not to *neglect* their most important Affairs. How many Arguments might be offer'd for holy Deligence ? does not the end you propose deserve it, the work you are engag'd in require it ; does not your great Master command it, and will not your glorious Reward requite it : Are you not intrusted with
many

many talents, and will not your Lord call *you* to an account as he requir'd *you* to occupy till he came. Is not the *Season* of your work important, the *Difficulties* that do attend it many? are not *immortal* Souls of unspeakable Value; 1 Pet. 5. 8. and do not the Enemies of Souls go about seeking whom they may devour; does not the follies of the weak, and the faults of the wicked call loudly upon you; will not your diligence for them be for the *Glory* of God, and their good, will it not be a *Credit* to Religion, a *Foy* to Angels; and a *Disappointment* to Devils? will it not be for your present growing *Peace*, and your future increas'd *Felicity*? for as you sow, so shall you also reap. 2 Tim. 1. 6. Expostulate therefore with your self, stir up the gift of God in you; ask the question often, Can I do no more for God who gave me all, for Christ who died for Souls? Can I do no more when the *Salvation* of others and my own *Salvation* depends upon it? can I do no more for a *Soul* when I have done so much for a *Body*? can I do no more when I have done so little? can I do no more when I can't do too much? can I do no more when I may be doing my last? can I do no more when the more I do, the more I shall receive?

6. Be much in Prayer. As a rational Creature, you are obliged to acknowledge the great God by Prayer and praise: for you live on the *Alms* of Heaven, and are maintain'd by the *Contributions* of his Earth; for a Man not to pray is to degenerate into a *Brute* or a *Devil*; the *Brute* cannot, and the *Devil* will not: As a *Christian*, you are under a peculiar obligation, to be often on the *Knee*; that you may exercise

exercise Grace, mortifie Corruption, perform your Duties, bear your Burdens, and enjoy your Comforts, as becometh the redeemed of the Lord ; you have such *bright Discoveries* of the divine Perfections, and of your own Wants ; such an *Advocate* without, and such an *Intercessor* within, as directs and sollicit to constant Devotion. As a Minister you are under more *peculiar* Obligations to be both *frequent* and *fervent* in Prayer: you must not only watch with Industry, but pray with Fervency ; what you *plant* by Preaching, *water* by Prayer, that's the most likely way to be successful ; without this it's not to be expected that God will bless us, as Instruments to quicken dead Souls, awaken secure Consciences, and Comfort distress'd Spirits. Our Lord and Master was *much in Prayer* ; and while praying, he was *Remarkably own'd* of God ; as at his *Baptism*, *Transfiguration*, and a little before his *Death* : When he was *Witness'd* to by Heaven, he was found *praying* upon Earth : And when his Servants open their Mouths by Prayer, the Heavens, are most likely to open, and fill them with Blessings. Prayer in private may make the Face like *Moses's* to shine in the Pulpit ; all our *Springs* are in Christ, from his fullness, we must receive. I have *obtain'd help of God*, ^{Acts 26.} *says the Apostle*, and *continue to this Day* : he *obtain'd it by Prayer*, and without it we must not expect help or continuance ; we must be taught of God to instruct others ; we should pray therefore for his *Teachings* and *Blessings*, that we may ^{Colos. 2.} *increase with all the increases of God* : Paul may ^{19.} *plant* and Apollos may *water*, but God only can ^{1 Cor. 3.} *give the increase*. ^{6. 7.}

7. *Be patient.* You must expect to meet with difficulties in your way and work, from the Ignorance and Mistake of some, and from the Passion and Prejudice of others. You will not find it easy to manage your self suitably to the *different Cases and Capacities, Tempers and Conditions, of Persons with whom you will be concerned.* The Inconstancy and Treachery of your own Heart, as well as the Faults and Follies of others, will make you often uneasie. Without a patient Care and Caution, from a threatening World and tempting Devil, from Fools and Knaves, Brutes and Idiots, you must expect to be disturbed.

Arm your self therefore with Patience, with

1 Cor. 13. 5. *a working, waiting, bearing, Patience: Be not surpris'd; be not easily provoked; suffer not your self to be discourag'd: For better is he that is patient in Spirit than he that is proud in Spi-*

Ecc. 7. 8. *rit; for the end of a thing is better than the beginning: You must expect to be observ'd and censured by the envious Eyes, and malicious Tongues of the common Crowd: You must pass thro'*

2 Cor. 6. 8, 9, 10. *Dishonour as well Honour, evil report as well as good report, &c. you will meet with many a false Charge and vile Reproaches from Tongues set*

Acts 20. 24. *on Fire of Hell; but let none of these things move you. The Servants of God in all Generations have been mocked and misused, talk'd against by*

1 Cor. 4. 13. *the Walls and Doors of the Houses. The Apostles were a Spectacle of Contempt to the World; your Predecessors gave you a glorious Example of Patience and Long-suffering; Fury did not*

1 Cor. 11. 1. *discourage them, and Malice now can't disgrace them. Be a follower of them as they were*
of

of Christ; by a patient continuance in well-doing, ^{1 Pet. 2.}
put to silence the most malignant Accusers. ^{15.}

8. *Be peaceable.* You preach the Gospel of Peace; and therefore it highly becomes you *if it be possible, to live peaceably with all Men:* ^{Rom. 12.}
On such is a *peculiar Blessedness*, pronounced, ^{18.}
Blessed are the peace-makers. Peace was proclaimed, ^{Mat. 5. 9.}
when Christ came into the World; it was purchas'd by him when he Tabernacled with Men; he *charged* it with his Disciples when he left the World. He commanded them to *keep* it that he might find it on the Earth when he return'd to the World again, who was to *come again without Sin to Salvation:* ^{Heb. 9.}
Keep therefore the *Unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*, if ever you expect a *Blessing* on ^{28.}
your ministerial Performance. Consider who ^{Eph. 4. 3}
are the Persons that *hold the Head*, and believe that good Christians must agree in greater things than 'tis possible for them to differ in. Let not therefore a Zeal for any Party intrench on common Christianity, and *restrain* upon sacred Charity. *Hast thou faith, have it to thyself;* without *deceiving* or *disturbing* others; let ^{Rom. 14.}
not any *private Opinion* be the *Standard of Truth*, ^{22.}
nor the *Opinion* of others the *Rule of thy Judgment*; but what is most for the *Glory of God*, the *Honour of Christ*, the *good of Mankind*, look upon as *true*; and let *Truth and Peace* then go together. If you differ from others, don't think your *Separation* is your *Sanctification*; let no *unhallowed Fire* be found in your *Censer*; let not the *Flame of Contention*, waste more than the *Fire of Persecution*: If the *Priests strive who will offer Sacrifice*, and if *Shepherds*

herds don't agree, where will the Sheep find due Pasture; Ministers should therefore say to one another as *Joseph* did to his *Brethren*, *fall not out by the way; for the Servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all Men, apt to teach, patient in meekness, instructing those who are contrary disposed.* Love is the *Livery* of a *Christian*, that peculiar *Badge* by which the *Disciples* of *Christ* are *every where* known.

Gen. 45.
24.

2 Tim. 2.
24. ver. 25.

Rom. 11.
13.

John 4.38.

1 Pet. 5.3.

1 Pet. 5.5.

Isa. 57.15.

1 Cor. 9.
22.

9. *Be humble.* You should *magnifie* your *Office*, but not your self; the *Word* of *God*, not the *Work* of *Man*: *Self-conceit* *Self confidence*, *Self-seeking*, and *Self-applause* are the *Reproach* of the *Ministry*. When you are *falsely accused* or *unjustly reproached*, you may *vindicate* your self as the *great Apostle* did; but yet it rather becomes you to suffer a little in your own *Reputation* than by *pride* or *passion* to *lessen* the *Reputation* of others: Carry it with *due respect* to aged *experienc'd Ministers*, who are *worthy* of *double Honour*; they have *laboured*, and you enter on their *labours*; neglect not your *work*, and despise not the *Workman*. The *Titles* of *Minister* and *Labourer* do bespeak *Humility* as many others do import the *highest Dignity*; don't lord it therefore over *God's Inheritance*, but be an *Example* to the *Flock* so as to *feed* them, and not *fleece* them. You can't expect any *Increase* of *Grace* without being *low* in your own *Eyes*: For *God only giveth grace* to the *humble*, and with such a *Soul* only does he *dwell*; without this you can't expect to be *acceptable*, and *successful*: For the *proud* are *resisted* both by *God*, and *Men*. You must therefore become *all things* to *all Men*, that you may gain *some*: As
you

you must not be *affraid* of the greatest Persons, so you must not *despise* the meanest Person. Your Redeemer gave you a *glorious Example* when he *washed the Disciples Feet*; and ^{John 13.} he expects you should *do as he has done*. It was ^{5. 15.} an early and shameful Fault among the Disciples that *they striv'd who should be greatest*: Be ^{Luke 22.} not therefore a *Follower of them* any farther ^{24.} then they were of Christ. Holy Herbert kept himself *humble* by always calling Christ *his Master*; and a greater than he even the great Apostle, stiled himself the *least of all Saints*. Pride is a provoking Sin in any but much more so in a Minister, who should be *clothed* ^{1 Pet. 5.5.} *with Humility*. The very Office of the Ministry renders the Sin of such more *Hainous* as we find under the Law, that when the People were but to bring a *Kid*, the Priest was to bring a *Bullock* to make an Atonement; to signify that the Crime of the one was more hainous than of the other.

10. *Be chearful, and constant in your work*. Be *chearful*: You cannot serve a better Master, engage in a more noble and important work, or expect a more glorious Reward; feed the Flock of Christ, taking the Oversight thereof, not by constraint but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ^{1 Pet. 5.2.} *ready mind*: Let not distracting Cares or tormenting Fears, as to the Concerns of your Life, prevent the security of your Spirit; but cast your care on the Lord, for surely he careth for you: He will never leave nor forsake you: Love ^{1 Pet. 5.7.} him and his and no good thing will be withhold ^{Heb. 13.5.} from you: He that is so kind to inferior Creatures, so good to the *unthankful and evil*, will

provide for his *Ambassadors*, and not suffer them to lack. He hath said that he *will cloath his Priests with Salvation* which I think (with the judicious Dr. Barrow) we may understand of temporal Blessings; *rejoice therefore and do good* : Not to do good is to be *unjust* to others; and not to *rejoice* is to be *unkind* to your self: Let the one therefore *feed* the other; let *holy Usefulness* always minister to *holy Joy*; but yet avoid vain Mirth and *foolish Festing*, which are not convenient: Let not thy Mirth be Madness, let it arise from something *within* rather than from anything *without*. Let a good Conscience be your continual *Feast*, and the Hope of a sure glorious Reward your growing *Joy*; let *Purity* and *Peace* go together; Ministers under Christ are the *Saviours* of the World; and surely the *Joy of the Lord* should be their strength. Cherish a Love to Christ, and a Love to immortal Souls; *live* above this World, by a *renewed Spirit*, looking to the *End of your Faith*, even the *Salvation of your Soul*; and you will be chearful.

Be constant. The Priests under the Law had a *Dismission*; but as long as you are able, you must be faithful, *constantly attending at the holy Altar*: You must be faithful to the very Death, or else you will not receive the *Crown of Life*. If you look back, and draw back, the *Plow* will not succeed, and God's Soul will have no pleasure in you. The Grace of God is ready to *assist* you, the Mercy of God to *accept* you, the Justice of God to *plead* for you, and the Faithfulness of God to *reward* you. *Be stedfast therefore, and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, and your labour in the Lord shall not be in vain.*

These

These are the things I charge upon you with the greatest *Solemnity*, according to the *Authority* of Christ ; and with the greatest *Compassion* according to the Bowels of Jesus ; and with due *Humility*, as being sensible of my own *Faults* and *Follies*. When *Aaron* and his Sons were consecrated, it's said of them for their Honour, that they *did all the things that were commanded by the Hand of Moses*. I can assure you from the Word of God, that if you do these things, you *shall never fail*. May the great *High Priest* increase your Gifts and Graces for his own Service and Glory, the Credit of Religion, the Good of Souls, and your own inward Peace. When *Aaron* was anointed, the Oyl ran down from the *Head, to the Skirts of the Garment*. May you have so plentiful an *Union* of the Divine Spirit, and be blest'd with all the *Increases* of God. Lev. 8. 35.

You, my (Reverend Fathers and Brethren) who have been concerned in this *Solemn Investiture*, have reason this Day to consider the Duties and Privileges of your High and Holy Calling. Herein I may be your Remembrancer, tho' I cannot be an Instructor. Does not this *Solemnity* call upon us this day, to look back on our past Miscarriages ? In many things Jam. 3. 2. we have offended all. Our Application therefore should be, *Oh enter not into judgment with us ; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified*. Ps. 143. 2. If thou, O Lord, art strict to mark what is done a-miss ; who shall stand ? Create in us a clean heart, Ps. 130. 3. and renew a right spirit within us. Ps. 51. 10. Surely we have not acted suitably in every respect, to the Dignity and Purity of our Functions. We

- Rom. 11. have not duly magnify'd our Office, by Labour
 13. and Travail, planting and watering in the
 Vineyard of the Lord; by a contempt of riches and
 Phil. 2. 21. filthy lucre, not seeking our own, but the things of
 Christ; by patience in suffering for the Name of Christ,
 2. Cor. 6. passing thro' Honour and Dishonour, a good
 8, 9. report, and evil report, as deceivers, and yet true; by
 Acts 24. a holy and blameless conversation, keeping a consci-
 16. ence void of offence towards God, and towards man.
- May not our Hearts smite us this day, that we
 have not employ'd our Parts and Powers,
 stirr'd up our Gifts and Graces with the utmost
 Vigour, to prevent the Ruin, and promote the
 Salvation of immortal Souls? Don't the Groans
 of the Churches, and the Spoils of Souls wit-
 ness against many? And are we free from
Faults and Follies? We have reason this day
 to be ashamed that we have done the Work of
 the Lord too negligently, that the Love of Christ and
 Soul has not powerfully constrain'd us. The
 High-Priest under the Law was *to carry on his*
Forehead the Iniquity of the holy things; the most
 pure Services were not sinless; the holy Priests
 and holy Sacrifices had some Blemishes and
 Imperfections: And we that are Ministers of
 the most High God, need the Blood of our
- Ex. 28. 38. High Priest, who was both a Priest and a Sa-
 crifice, to cleanse us from the Sins of our most
 holy Ministrations; to purge away *the Filth*
of his House, as well as of our own. It can only
 by his Blood be writ on both, *Holiness to the*
Lord. May we all this day be washed with the
Blood of Sprinkling, so as to be purify'd, par-
 don'd and accepted! May we this day resolve
- Col. 4. 17. in the Strength of Christ to take heed to our selves,
 and the Ministry committed to us, that we may
 be

be faithful to immortal Souls. As we have reason this day to be ashamed, so have we abundant Cause of Blessing and Praise. It becomes us to bless the Name of the Lord, who spared our Lives, and inclined and called us to serve at his Altars ; who has continu'd us in his House to this day ; who has *encourag'd* and *supported* us under all Weights and Pressures, and blest our Labours with any Success. Who are we, and what was our Father's House, that we should be anointed for the Temple, and be Ministers of God for the good of Souls ? *Bless ye the Lord, all ye his Ministers ; let all the people praise him !* How great is our Privilege ? how glorious will be our Reward ? If we are faithful *to the death*, we shall receive a *Crown of Life* ; if we shine as *Lights* of the World, we shall shine as *Stars* for ever in the right hand of the Redeemer. When *Peter* was preaching, the Holy Ghost fell on all them that heard the Word. *Acts 10.* May the blessed Spirit assist you in Preaching, and others in Hearing, and crown your Labours with abundant Success.

And now it becomes me to speak a Word to you that are *Witnesses* to this solemn Consecration. When *Aaron* was consecrated by *Moses*, we read, that the Assembly was gathered together to the door of the Tabernacle of the Congregation. This is the Thing which the Lord commanded to be done. What we have done, is according to Order. I hope none here will say what some of that Assembly afterwards said, *Ye take too much upon you, ye sons of Levi.* As long as a Bible is to be found in the World, our Commission may be produced, however some
may

may think that our *Ministrations* are meer Nullities. The *Law of God* and the *Law of the Land* may give them an Answer, without much disputing. The Order of *Presbyters* was always allow'd, and is not now restrained. It becomes you this day to bless God for a *Gospel Ministry*; the greatest Blessing to a sinful perishing World; and that you enjoy a Liberty to worship God, according to your own Perswasion. Let not that Liberty be a Pretence to prophesie, or a Breach of Charity; but let it be thankfully and peaceably improved for the Glory of God, and your own good, without censuring and condemning others; for if you think you have more Light, it will be a Reproach if you should have less Love. Let Purity and Peace be the happy Fruit of that Enlargement, which you owe to a Queen, as Gracious at home, as she is Glorious abroad; and bless God, that under the benign Influence of her wise, just, and merciful Government, you enjoy a *Regular Ministry*, which is more immediately intituled to the divine Blessing. The Invasion of the *Ministry* by Men without Character and Mission, Rude and Unlearned, of mean and sordid Occupations, is to be deeply lamented, and rigorously opposed. What a Reproach is it in our *Israel*, that *Illiterate Artizans* and *Mechanicks* who are ignorant to deceive themselves, and presumptuous in deceiving others, should set up for *Gospel Ministers*? The *Evangelical Ministry* is as sacred as the *Legal Priesthood*: For no man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. Without due Qualification, and Regular Mission, any pretended Ministry is but an

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Usurpation, such Persons may presume to act, but their *Warrant* is not signed. They may pretend that the Spirit of God does not need the *Learning* of any, but they may be sure he does not need their *Ignorance*; the Spirit of God is a Spirit of Wisdom and Order, and therefore darkness and confusion are none of his *Gifts*. Some may pretend to extraordinary *Illuminations* and *Excitations*, but others will look upon it as Design or Delusion; if they want *Sense* and Order, *Purity* and *Peace*, it may well be supposed to be nothing more than a *Chymical Operation*, *Diabolical-Suggestion*, or *Mechanical Agitation*. Many are ready to say the Apostle *Paul* was a *Tent-Maker*, and therefore they may Work on the *Week-day*, and preach on the *Lord's-day*; to such I'll freely say, when they are *duly qualified*, and *regularly sent forth*, as the Great Apostle was, if there be a *Necessity*, they may first *make their Tent*, and then *Preach* in it. 'Tis fit for such Persons to consider, that it was a *Custom* among the *Jews*, of what *Rank* or *Quality* so ever, to teach their Children some *Ingenious Art*, as a *Remedy* against *Idleness*, and as a *Reserve* in time of want: There is a memorable Instance of this Custom in the *Two Jewish Brothers*, the Story of which is largely related by *Josephus*; * the same Custom prevails amongst the *Oriental Nations* to this day; he who fills the *Throne*, works sometimes with those *Hands* with which, at other times he *Wields* the *Scepter*. † The most learned *Men* among the *Jews*, as they learnt some

* *Antiq. Jud.* l. 18. c. 12. † *Knowtl's Turk. Hist.* Vol. 2.

Acts 22.
3.

Acts 16.
31.

Acts 22.
5.

Acts 16.
4.

Piece of Mechanism in their younger days, so they afterwards spent their *spare Hours* therein; the greatest Rabbies did not excuse themselves. The Apostle Paul was brought up at the Feet of the Hebrew Masters, and according to custom did employ himself in *Tent-making*, or in making *Tapestries* and *Canopies*, wrought for the Palaces of Kings and Nobles, as the original Word will allow. St. Paul's Birth and Education was very creditable, for he was born a *Roman Citizen*; this Priviledge did descend to him from his Ancestors; he laid the Foundation of his Studies at *Tarsus*, an Academy as famous as *Athens*; there he was furnish'd with the Learning of the *Greeks*, as appears by his Citations out of the Authors of the greatest Name *. From *Tarsus* the Apostle went to *Jerusalem*, and under the Hebrew Sages was acquainted with the Divine Philosophy of *Moses*; he become hereby a Person of Great Credit and esteem; for he was known to the High-Priest, and all the Estate of the Elders, to the whole Supreme Council of the Sanhedrim; he could boldly appeal to the Testimony of a whole Nation: so that we may conclude that the Apostle was no other way concern'd in this Craft, than as the greatest Doctors among the Jews were employ'd occasionally in some Calling, meerly by way of prevention against sudden and surprizing Turns of Providence: It was not a daily Task and Business.

It has been well observed by an ingenious Person †, that the Case of the Apostle was so singular, that the present Ministers

* As Aratus, Menander. † Mr. Falle in a Visitat. Sermon, p. 27.

cannot be *influenc'd* by his *Example* in this matter; for the Apostle was exceedingly zealous in observing the *Traditions of his Fathers*. *Unto the Jews he became as a Jew*, and so work't sometimes with his Hands, to keep up a *conformity* with the Learned Doctors that thereby he might the better please: It was his Prudence at that Time, that thereby he *might gain some*. Besides, the *unsettled Condition* of the Church ought to be considered; there was no *certain Provision* made for those that labour'd in the Ministry; and the Apostle would not hinder the Success of his Ministry by putting any to constant Charge. When St. Paul wrought for his Maintenance, it did *not lessen* his Care and Vigilance for the Churches; the work of God, did not *stand still* while the other went on: and 'tis fit to be consider'd, that the Apostle seems to be aware of the Ill use that might be made of his Example; in as much as he takes great Care throughout his Writings to assert the *Liberty and Priviledge* of the Evangelical Ministry, and to free it from *manual Labour*; he professes what he did was the *Result* of his own Choice; he insinuates that of all the Apostles *he only and Barnabas* wrought with their Hands; and that they *had power* also to *forbear working*, and challenge a suitable Maintenance from the Church: For *who goeth a Warfare at any time at his own Charge, &c. who planteth a Vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof, &c. the Lord hath ordained that they that preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel: As Christ himself had said, the workman is worthy of his Meat.* And after all, the Apostle himself received the *Benevolence* of the Churches: For he speaks

Gal. 1. 14.
1 Cor. 9.
20.

1 Cor. 9.

13. 14.

Math. 10.

of

- 2 Cor. 11. 8, 9. of Supplies sent him *once and again* from Macedonia. I might here observe to you that the Heathens would not suffer the Ministers of their Religion to do any *servile work*; the Advancement of an *Artificer* to the *Dignity* of the Priesthood was declared by them to be a *disrespect to the Gods* *. The Priests and Levites under the Law by God's special Command had *no part in the Inheritance of the Land*, that the *necessary Culture* thereof might not *debase* their Minds, and make them *less fit* for sacred Ministrations: they had nothing to do but in their several *Classes and Courses* to attend the Service of the Altar †. The Clergy in this Nation subscribed a Declaration that they *would not intermeddle with any Occupation* *; Without such a Subscription the Spirit of God directs
- Numb. 18 20. Ministers to *give themselves wholly to it*. He that warreth entangleth not himself, with the affairs of this Life. As you have reason to bless God this Day for a regular Ministry, so you have abundant Reason to consider how you are oblig'd to carry your selves towards them that are set over you in the Lord: You must esteem them
- 1 Tim. 4 v. 15. highly for their works sake; for they are worthy of double Honour, as they are the helpers of your Faith and Joy: You must attend constantly on their Ministry, receive their Message, follow
- 1 Thei. 5. 3.

* Aristotle Polit. l. 7. c. 9. ὑπὸ γὰρ τῶν πολιτῶν ἀρέπει τιμᾶσθαι τὰς θείας, &c. * Dr Lightfoot Observes, the Sacerdotes Clerici, did not meddle in any Mechanick Labours. But the Sacerdotes Plebei, to prevent Want, did employ themselves in some Art, Hor. Heb. ad Matb. 2. 4. † In Queen Eliz. time, B. Sparow's Collect. B. Sarum H. of Refor. none were allow'd but when Ministers were wanted; as wasted by persecution. * Observ'd by Mr. Falle who clears this matter as to the ancient Councils and Canons.

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their Example *pray* for their lives and the Success of their Labours, *value* their Converse, *rejoice* in their good, *sympathize* with their sorrow, *Credit* their Names, *cover* their Faults, and *copy* their Virtues : You *must* plead for the Continuance and Encrease of their Gifts, and Graces, and *lament* their removal ; you must be *forward* to contribute to their *creditable comfortable* maintenance : you must not (as 'tis order'd) *forget the Levite all the Days of your Life*. Under the Law even those Priests that did *not serve* at the Altar were *maintain'd* by the Altar : Surely then they that give Spiritual good things under the Gospel, should partake of their Temporal good things : King *Hezekiah* order'd the People that dwelt at *Jerusalem*, to give the Portion of the Priests and Levites, *that they might be encouraged in the Law* 1 Chron. 9. of God. Let not your Ministers want *due en-* 14. *couragement* : Consider what *provision* was made for the Priests under the Legal Dispensation : When they could *not work*, they did *not want* ; what provision has been made by *Heathens* for those that minister'd in holy things ; What *Commands* there are in the Gospel for mind- ing a suitable Maintenance ; how *uncapable* Ministers are to make any Provision for a Family, as the *Court, Camp and Exchange* are shut against them ; how in all Ages they have been the Credit of a People. Consider how plentiful is the *provision* of Papists, and what great Encouragement is given to the Priest among the deluded Mahometans : How obliged *Ministers* are to abundant Charity ; How *ready* they are to do you good, and what *an account* you must give to God, if you don't promote the

the Credit and Comfort of those who are the *Servants of Christ for your sakes*. Let a Prophet have a *Prophet's Reward* ; if it be little in this World, it will be the greater in another.

And now *let us all* consider that the Word that is preach't by us, and heard by you, is the *Savour of Life unto Life, or of Death unto Death* ! Heaven or Hell will be the Issue of it in a *little while*. May this *Important Consideration* make us all Serious and Careful, Faithful and Industrious, that we may not be *Eternal Cast-aways*. May we all *this day* be accepted of God : When *Aaron* was Consecrated, and according to his Commission, Officiated, we read that a Fire came out from before the Lord and consumed upon the Altar the Burnt Offering ; as a Token of the divine Acceptance, which when all the People saw, *they shouted, and fell upon their Faces*. We are not at this day to expect so glorious an Appearance ; but we may all be sure by the word of God, that what we have done with Sincerity, Seriousness and Regularity is accepted thro' the Blood of Christ. Let us therefore rejoice in the Lord God of our Salvation. Now, to the Father, Son, and Spirit, one Eternal God, be Glory for ever. Amen.

1 Cor. 9.
27.

Levit. 9.
24.

F I N I S.





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Pope - Life + Death -

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